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**Spirituality in principal leadership  
and its influence on teachers and teaching**

A thesis submitted in fulfilment  
of the requirements for the degree of

**Doctor of Philosophy**

in

**Education**

at

**The University of Waikato**

by

**Alaster Raymond Gibson**



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**WAIKATO**  
*Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato*

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## **Declaration**

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma of the university or other institute of higher learning, except where due acknowledgment has been made in the text.

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## ABSTRACT

Spirituality in educational leadership has received renewed interest in the past decade. A growing body of literature claims that spirituality can make a difference in leadership practice. Spirituality is a complex and controversial human phenomenon, the meaning of which may be shaped and re-shaped by diverse perspectives and experiences. It includes personal, social-cultural and transcendent connectedness, meaning making about life and living, and a desire to move towards greater authenticity between beliefs, moral-values, attitudes and actions.

My interest in spirituality in educational leadership relates to my professional background as a primary school teacher, lecturer in teacher education, and because of who I am as a Christian. The focus of my research inquiry was, 'What might the phenomenon of spirituality *in* principal leadership and its influence on teachers and teaching be perceived to mean, in three public primary school contexts?

Based on my literature review I decided to take an open position on the definition of spirituality. I chose an interpretive constructivist paradigm and a singular case study to explore my research question. My field work involved twelve participants, comprising three principals and nine teachers from three public primary schools in the North Island of New Zealand. This qualitative and triangulated research design enabled me to explore spirituality in principal leadership from the lived experiences of the participants. Data was gathered through three procedures across a one year period, namely semi-structured interviews, supported by overt non-participant observations, and principal reflective journals. A cyclical, inductive and reflexive method of analysis was applied to the data resulting in four key themes being identified.

The findings showed that the principals believed their personal meanings of spirituality were integrated, filtered and fitted into a range of professional tasks, the modelling of leadership styles and contributed to their resilience. They also believed their spirituality was reciprocally influenced by their school contexts. Teacher participants affirmed that spirituality in principal leadership could be positively influential when expressed appropriately and accompanied with

integrity, quality care for others and professional competence. Teacher participants attributed predominantly positive emotional and practical effects to spirituality in their principal's leadership with some teachers expressing ambivalence and a few describing incidences which resulted in some negative feelings.

These findings affirm claims in the literature regarding the integrated nature of spirituality and its positive contribution to leader resilience. The findings also reveal nuanced insights into the effects of school contexts and the ways that spirituality in principal leadership was perceived by teachers to be influential. Identified through the research process was the difficulty teacher participants had in apportioning influence to *spirituality* in principal leadership as an integrated dimension of the person who leads. One implication from the findings is that educational leaders might find spirituality useful as another lens or learning tool through which they can critically examine their professional practice. The thesis concludes with a recommendation that further research be conducted into exploring the meaning of teachers' spirituality and the influence this might have on their teaching.

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*'The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.'* Holy Bible, Galatians 5:22

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## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Decile rating of schools	A statistical rating of the socio-economic status of the school community. Used for Government funding. 1-10 scale, ten being the highest socio-economic rating.
Influence of the principal	Ability of the principal to cause or contribute towards effecting change in thinking, attitudes, emotions, beliefs, and actions of teachers, directly, indirectly and or reciprocally.
Ministry of Education (MoE)	The Ministry of Education is the New Zealand Government's lead advisor on the education system, shaping direction for education agencies and providers.
New Zealand Teachers Council	The New Zealand Teachers Council is the professional and regulatory body for teachers in New Zealand.
Principal leadership	Understood as a complex personal and distributed professional process of influence in school based education. Principal leadership includes both educational and administrative leadership.
Public primary school	State funded, locally governed, co-educational community based institutions catering for children from Years 1- 8 of the national compulsory school system. Usually this means children aged 5-12 years.
Spirituality	A complex and controversial human phenomenon, the meaning of which may be shaped and re-shaped by diverse perspectives and experiences. It includes personal, social-cultural and transcendent connectedness, meaning making about life and living, and a desire for greater authenticity, resulting in consistency between people's beliefs, moral-values, attitudes and their actions.
Teacher	School based professional educators. In this study eight teachers were fully qualified, registered and experienced. 1 was an experienced special education needs coordinator with a limited authority to teach children with behavioural needs.

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

*'Little or no research has been conducted about the spiritual or religious beliefs leaders may hold and how those beliefs may impact leader actions.'*

(Dent, Higgins & Wharff, 2005, p. 642).

### **Rationale for the thesis**

Spirituality *in* principal leadership is not one form of leadership but recognizes principals who integrate personal meanings of spirituality into their preferred leadership practice in appropriate ways for their own well-being and the well-being of their school communities. Several factors contributed to my interest in this topic. Firstly, during my career as a primary teacher, school middle manager, and currently as a lecturer in pre-service teacher education, I have become increasingly aware of the influence principals can have on teachers. Secondly, my Masters Degree research project focused on the role of a principal in leadership in teaching and learning. This study helped me understand the complexity of school leadership influence and motivated me to explore the subject further. Thirdly, I am interested in spirituality because of who I am as a Christian. I value spirituality personally and professionally.

Another contributing factor to my choice of study was that spirituality in educational leadership is relatively under-researched, receiving renewed interest in New Zealand and internationally mainly in the past decade. The quote cited above by Dent, Higgins and Wharff (2005), highlights the situation at it was at the commencement of my doctoral work in 2005.

Educational leadership studies have traditionally focused on leader traits, intelligence, behaviours, beliefs, task functions and styles (e.g. Bush, 1995; Leithwood, Jantzi & Steinbach, 1999; Razik & Swanson, 1995; Schein, 1992; Southworth, 2002; Stewart & Prebble, 1993; Wylie, 1997). These studies explored the influential role principals provide in terms of instructional leadership, transforming school cultures, and creating conditions for building and sustaining teacher effectiveness (Day, 2009; Rossow & Warner, 2000; Sergiovanni, 2000; Smith & Andrew, 1989; Weber, 1997). Many of these

studies recognise the importance of principals being role models, promoting values of care and social justice, and being collaborative. However most of these studies do not include the term spirituality in their work.

In the past decade increasing numbers of researchers have begun to focus explicitly on spirituality and its application to a wide range of educational areas including educational leadership practice and teaching (e.g. de Souza, 2004; Dixon, 2002; Flintham, 2003; Fraser, 2007; Fry, 2005; Gibbs, 2006; Palmer, 1998; Ramirez, 2009; Woods, 2007). This growing body of literature also suggests spirituality may contribute positively and meaningfully to people's lives, both individually and organisationally (Dantley, 2005; Glazer, 1999; Starratt, 2003; West, 1982).

I believe this renewed interest in spirituality is linked to several factors. Firstly, writers are adopting a broader, humanistic conceptualisation of spirituality that focuses on institutional and interpersonal values and behaviours. Secondly, spirituality may have been overlooked in the past due to what some academic researchers refer to as the prevalence of academic hegemony operating in higher educational institutions (Denton, 1996; Dillard, Abdur-Rashid & Tyson, 2000; Meyes, 2004). That is, the dominant ideology and theory of naturalism, which is atheistic, may have contributed to the exclusion of research in spirituality (Coleson & Pearcey, 1999; Noebel, 2001). Thirdly, spirituality might have lain somewhat dormant as a topic of interest in academic research due to its traditional association with religious perspectives and the challenge this posed for national, non-sectarian, public education in Western democratic countries.

Another influence in my choice of study was that the New Zealand Ministry of Education (MoE, 1996; 1999, 2000) and various overseas government education agencies include spirituality in some of their curriculum documents. I also found that the New Zealand Teachers Council (2007), code of ethics for registered teachers, identifies the promotion of the spiritual well-being of students as part of its first criteria called, 'Commitment to learners.' Even the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) acknowledges the importance of children's spiritual development and their spiritual and moral well-being. These documents affirmed to me that spirituality could be relevant to school based educational leadership.

Therefore, the rationale behind my choice of study is based on a combination of personal and professional experience, the renewed interest in spirituality within educational leadership literature, and the presence of spirituality or spiritual well-being in key educational documents. These factors encouraged me to pursue the topic of spirituality in principal leadership and to investigate its potential for making a significant contribution to educational leadership research.

### **Focus of the research**

My forays into the sea of literature began to reveal a number of theorists and researchers with diverse philosophical perspectives, definitions, and approaches to spirituality. Most of this literature affirmed a range of positive organisational outcomes associated with spirituality in the workplace and in educational leadership. These outcomes related to issues such as personal resilience, interpersonal relationships, job satisfaction and organisational performance.

My examination of the literature revealed that defining and quantifying spirituality was a challenge (Benfiel, 2005; Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003). The literature also showed an overlap between what was attributed to spirituality and what had been previously researched or implied under different terms. For example, values and character education, relational and transformational leadership, were some of the topics that shared commonality with this renewed discourse into spirituality (Cooper, 2005; Komives, Lucas & McMahon, 1998; Robb, 2008). I also critically examined authors' pre-suppositions which underpinned their research in order to better understand their arguments and findings. Sometimes their pre-suppositions were explicitly revealed in the text and sometimes they were more subtle, being apparent only through the sub-text of what they did not say.

Through the literature review process I found several under-explored areas of research in the field of spirituality in educational leadership. In particular, I noticed that qualitative case studies exploring the influence of spirituality in principal leadership that included teacher participants in public primary school contexts did not appear to have been conducted in New Zealand, or in countries

overseas. I realised therefore that this focus on the lived experience of spirituality could make a worthwhile contribution to educational leadership research.

I found in the literature a range of qualitative and to a lesser extent quantitative studies on spirituality in organisations and in educational leadership. I found that most of this research took a defined position in regard to the term spirituality. Defining spirituality helped researchers standardise their use of language but it also assumed that their definitions of spirituality would be sufficiently inclusive of participants' meanings and experiences. Upon reflection I decided to explore spirituality in principal leadership from an open or undefined position in which I could focus on participants' meanings.

I also refined my research questions during the review of the literature. The over-arching research problem became, 'What might the phenomenon of spirituality in principal leadership and its influence on teachers and teaching be perceived to mean, in three public primary school contexts?' The focus of this inquiry was further clarified into four subsidiary questions. These being,

- What does the phenomenon of spirituality mean to participants?
- What might spirituality in principal leadership mean to participants?
- By what means might spirituality in principal leadership be perceived to be influential?
- What influence might spirituality in principal leadership have on teachers and their teaching?

### **The structure of the thesis**

The structure of my thesis comprises seven chapters. Following this introductory chapter is a comprehensive literature review which critically examines the field of spirituality in education both within in New Zealand and internationally. The review identifies the main philosophical positions, key theorists and research in the field. The review highlights the major debates and critical issues relating to the subject, including the difficulty of defining and quantifying spirituality and ascribing causality to it. The review also opens up

some limitations or gaps in the literature providing opportunity for my research to make a contribution to this emerging field in educational leadership. ‘

In the third chapter I focus on the research process and why I selected a qualitative interpretive methodology and descriptive case study strategy as the most appropriate way for me to explore my research questions. This chapter explains how I enhanced the trustworthiness of the data by triangulating the research design. This involved recruiting one principal and three teachers from three primary schools and incorporating three data gathering procedures, the main one being semi-structured interviews.

In chapters four and five I tell the story of the findings from my case study fieldwork. Chapter four focuses on describing the demographics of my participants and their schools, the participants’ perspectives and understandings of spirituality, and their perceptions of the praxis of spirituality in principal leadership. Chapter five presents the findings into the means by which spirituality was perceived to be influential and its effects on teachers and their teaching.

In chapter six I discuss the significance of the findings, the critical factors involved, how they address the underlying research questions, and how they relate to the literature reviewed. The seventh and final chapter summarizes the key findings. It also explains several implications and limitations of the findings, as well as providing a recommendation for future research into teachers’ spirituality. A brief conclusion completes the final chapter by drawing together the heart of the thesis and inviting the reader to draw his or her own evaluation of the work.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

*If we ignore the issues of spirituality, we are abrogating our responsibilities as educational leaders to provide the spiritual care that constitutes one of the essential moral rights of an individual who comes to our public education system*  
(Shields, 2005, p. 15).

### **Introduction to the literature review**

The quotation cited above provides a perspective on spirituality by Carolyn Shields, professor of educational organisation and leadership from the College of Education, University of Illinois, in which she draws attention to the importance of spirituality within public educational leadership debate. But what is meant by spirituality and what are the issues that relate to it? In the following literature review I examine these questions and many others. I provide an overview of the nature of the field of spirituality its meaning generally and its application in education and leadership, including historical and current developments. The review concludes by identifying several limitations or gaps in the literature and how they have informed the focus of this study.

This literature review represents an important and integral contribution to the research as a whole. The review has been a non-linear, interactive and cyclical process in which multiple conceptual understandings of spirituality and the scope of the inquiry have become clearer. The purpose of the review is to inform my research, the focus of which is spirituality in principal leadership. Of particular interest is the influence spirituality in principal leadership may have on teachers and their teaching practice. This review is not intended to summarise all the literature pertaining to these issues. Rather it provides some contextualisation of spirituality *in* principal leadership both internationally and within New Zealand.

Due to the vast field of literature that could be of interest to my research topic, my approach to the review necessitated several restrictions on the material accessed. Firstly, I restricted the socio-political and historical overview to the public education system within New Zealand from around the time the national public education system was legislated for in 1877, up until the latest curriculum

document of 2007. Secondly, I have limited the discussion of the sub-fields of indigenous cultural spiritualities, religious spiritualities, feminist and philosophical perspectives on spirituality to general critical comments. I have not reviewed the sub-field of literature pertaining to children's spirituality because it is outside the scope of my research which is focused on principals and teachers.

I searched the field of literature by accessing a variety of library data-bases available through the University of Waikato and Bethlehem Tertiary Institute. I used key words and phrases such as, spirituality in leadership, spirituality in the workplace, spirituality in education, spirituality in educational leadership, spirituality in principal leadership, and the influence of spirituality. In addition to searching the EBSCO suite of data bases, (Academic Research Library, CBCA Education, ERIC, and GALE) for scholarly articles and essays, I also searched the Australasian Digital Theses Programme, library book catalogues, and several online educational conference sites in New Zealand, Australia, Canada, England and the U.S.A for paper presentations. Google was also helpful for online books, author profiles and author contact details.

My literature review was developed over two phases. Phase one was spread over a twelve month period during the development of the research proposal, methodology and design in order to better understand the field and clarify the focus and scope of the inquiry. Phase two extended across another twelve month period involving the writing of the discussion of the findings in which the findings were critically examined against the literature previously cited and new material published since the initial review began. The organisation of the literature has been arranged into seven sections.

- The phenomenon of spirituality- what does this mean?
- Socio-political history of spirituality in public education in New Zealand.
- Spirituality within the workplace generally.
- Spirituality within leadership theory.
- Research into spirituality within educational leadership.
- The defining question.
- Limitations in the research.

My first section presents an overview of the meaning of the term ‘phenomenon of spirituality’ in which I discuss the complex and diverse perspectives on the topic and provide a foundation for the subsequent more in-depth sections of the literature review. The second section provides critical insight into some of the historical debate in New Zealand pertaining to spirituality in public education in order to understand the present day context in which my research is situated. The third section focuses on spirituality in the workplace generally and its relevance to educational settings. The fourth section discusses a range of issues where spirituality links with leadership theory.

In the fifth section I critically examine a variety of quantitative and qualitative research into spirituality within educational leadership. This is followed by the sixth section which discusses the main challenges with defining spirituality. The final section of the review identifies several under-explored areas within the existing research into spirituality in principal leadership and the contribution my research hopes to make in addressing those areas.

This chapter therefore, provides an overview of literature relevant to my topic of spirituality in principal leadership and its influence on teachers and teaching. It highlights a number of challenges especially with multiple-perspectives of spirituality and its similarity with other leadership styles. It also identifies an emerging and diverse range of research that suggests spirituality is be able to contribute to workplaces generally and schools specifically.

## **The phenomenon of spirituality - What does this mean?**

### *Introduction*

This section of the literature review provides a critical discussion and clarification of the meaning of the term ‘the phenomenon of spirituality’. In discussing the literature an ontological framework is developed around which to make sense of what is a controversial and contested phenomenon. The emphasis of this section is to explore meaning rather than a definition.

### *Phenomenon*

The word phenomenon according to McWilliams (2004, p.1) is derived from the Greek word 'phainomenon' which in its verb form means 'to appear'. Phenomenon has different meanings within various contexts. In common parlance the word refers to anything that is considered extra-ordinary or even paranormal. Scientifically, phenomenon refers to any state or event that may be observed such as germination, energy, or the moon's orbit which can then be subject to experimentation to determine the causality of that phenomenon. Within philosophy, phenomenon refers to any *perceived* event that we experience and become consciously aware of through our senses and our minds. Phenomena from this perspective are understood to be interpreted subjectively in that our perception of events is influenced by individual, social/cultural and contextual factors. In social science, phenomenon may refer to individual and social behaviour. In my thesis the word phenomenon is used in the context of constructivist, phenomenological social science field research and refers to the *lived experience* of spirituality in principal leadership as perceived by participants. Burch (1990, p. 1) in discussing lived experience within phenomenology draws on the work of Schutz (1967) saying,

*Meaning does not lie in the experience. Rather, those experiences are meaningful which are grasped reflectively.... It is then, incorrect to say that my lived experiences are meaningful merely in virtue of their being experienced or lived through.... The reflective glance singles out an elapsed lived experience and constitutes it as meaningful.*

In discussing the work of the phenomenologist Heidegger (1962), Large (n.d., p. 1) says,

*Phenomenology grasps the phenomena in that manner in which they directly show themselves, rather than importing some theory from the outside that claims to grasp the phenomena in their essence rather than their appearance.*

### *Spirituality*

But what is meant by the phenomenon of *spirituality*? Etymologically the noun spirituality is derived from the word 'spirit' which comes from the Latin spiritus, meaning breath (Torrell, 1996). This suggests something elusive and yet vital

(Burkhardt & Nagai-Jacobson, 2002; English & Gillen, 2000). *Literally* spirituality refers to a person's spiritual life or the lived reality of what is perceived to be spiritual. However spirituality needs further clarification in terms of understanding the fundamental characteristics of what a person's spiritual life might consist of. Who determines which fundamental characteristics do or don't pertain to spirituality? How can we make visible or perceive something that is by nature elusive?

Generally speaking, most of the literature reviewed acknowledged that the phenomenon of spirituality relates to people's beliefs, moral-values, attitudes and actions. Understanding these characteristics more specifically is where the academic study of spirituality becomes complex. This is because underpinning people's beliefs, moral-values, attitudes and actions are diverse epistemological, ontological, psychological, social, cultural, scientific and theological pre-suppositional lenses. Shields (2005, p. 8), argues that spirituality,

*functions as an epistemology. That is, spiritualities are systems of explanation providing the framework for people to interpret their own life-world and formulate knowledge and truths from their experiences.*

For example, a considerable amount of literature affirmed that the phenomenon of spirituality is commonly understood as a universal innate human dimension (Brown & Furlong, 1996; Fraser & Grootenboer, 2004; Watson, 2000) but not all people recognise it as such. Spirituality as a dimension of humanness may undergo development and transformation (Gibbs, 2006; Roehlkerpartain, 2007). Waaijman (2002) discusses claims that spirituality is both a socially diverse and highly personalized or *interiorized* phenomenon (Waaijman, 2002). This notion of intrapersonal and interpersonal connectedness is highlighted by Starratt (2004, p. 67) who explains spirituality as 'a way of being present to the deepest realities of one's world.' Palmer (1998, p. 5) says in the context of teaching that spirituality refers to, 'the diverse ways we answer the heart's longing to be connected with the largeness of life.' Dent, Higgins and Wharff (2005, p. 640), support these views by saying,

*With respect to whether the concept [of spirituality] is an individual or collective phenomenon (or both), the vast majority*

*of the literature suggests that there is no reason, at this point, to assume that it might not be both.*

People's meaning making of spirituality will reflect their unique and eclectic life experiences (positive, indifferent and negative) which in turn reflect the influences of dominant political, educational, religious and economic ideologies and institutional practices (Shields, Edwards & Sayani, 2005). Spirituality is complex because it can be perceived and experienced in a range of ways - cognitively, intuitively, emotionally, behaviourally, culturally and socially (Groen, 2001; Sergiovanni, 2000). At a more local level the influence of workplace contexts and personal agency will also contribute to people's meaning making of spirituality (Barnett, Krell & Sendry, 2000; Cacioppe, 2000; Frick, 2009).

To illustrate these points further, many people understand spirituality through *indigenous cultural traditions* comprising animistic or pantheistic tribal customs, beliefs and practices which contribute to their spiritual identity and view of life (de Souza & Rymarz, 2007; Smith, 2000; Tse, Lloyd, Petchkovsky & Manaia, 2005). In many cases these indigenous cultural meanings of spirituality have been overlaid and re-shaped by Western colonization (Iseke-Barnes, 2003; Olomo, 2007) and oppression in various forms- economic, as well as gendered and racist power relationships (Castle, 2001; Dewr 1998; Dollahite, 1998; Harris, 1997; Halford, 1999; Iseke-Barnes, 2003; McPhillips, 1999; Perez, 2004).

Within New Zealand, Maori iwi and hapu (tribes and sub-tribes) have various traditional understandings of spirituality that integrate their cosmological beliefs with everyday life. The Federation of Maori Authorities (2004, p. 1) defines the Maori spiritual world view as, ' a world governed by Ranginui the Sky Father, and Papatuanuku the Earth Mother - the primal parents from whom Maori descend - and their pantheon of children.' A comprehensive explanation of the terms mana atua (sacred spiritual power from the atua sometimes translated gods, spirits or guardians), mana whenua (tribal customary authority over the land), mana tangata (power or status residing in people) and tikanga (culture, custom, ethic, etiquette, fashion, formality, lore [Maori Dictionary – online]) is outside the scope of this literature review. However the document Human Rights

in New Zealand Today, Nga Tika Tangata o te Motu (2004, p. 1), explains how spirituality is inseparably and closely interwoven into these Maori concepts;

*Maori spirituality is an inherent part of tikanga Maori linking mana Atua, mana whenua, and mana tangata. The recognition and protection of tikanga Maori... cannot be separated from Maori spiritual beliefs.*

Some writers on spirituality express concerns with spiritual disconnection and integration within society. Interwoven into women's spirituality are the ideologies of feminism, egalitarianism and social reconstructionism (Blackmore, 1999; Martin, 1998). Women's perspectives of spirituality discuss the important ways women construct knowledge through relational connectedness (Tisdell, 2003). Feminist spirituality perspectives challenge gendered power relationships and the use of androcentric language associated with God within traditional religious institutions. Feminist spirituality also engages with deconstructing women's perception of inferiority and may incorporate neo-pagan, matriarchal discourse or goddess talk. According to Mantin (2000, p. 157)

*The work of feminist theo/alogians has generated new and transformative expressions of spirituality. They have challenged the dualistic and androcentric assumptions underlying traditional spiritualities.*

Philosophically spirituality may be understood in a variety of ways, both rationally and empirically (Hunnex, 1986; Lincoln & Guba, 2000). The meaning of spirituality varies among philosophical theories such as humanism, naturalism, agnosticism, atheism, theism, pantheism and scepticism. In describing humanism Kurtz (1973, p.16) says,

*We find insufficient evidence for belief in the existence of the supernatural... we can discover no divine purpose or providence for the human species... as non-theists, we begin with humans not God, nature not deity.*

In contrast to Kurtz' perspective above, the literature reviewed recognised that many people may understand spirituality through a transcendent lens, including belief in absolute truth or grand narrative based on supernatural revelation (Batten, 2003; Van Reken, 1996). The meaning of spirituality therefore may be

connected to philosophical arguments regarding ultimate reality and the origin of life (Hunnex, 1986). Some of the literature acknowledged both material *and* non-material ontological frameworks for explaining spirituality (Anderson, 1995; Carreira, 2009; Geisler and Feinberg, 1980; Vella, 2000). Some writers perceived spirituality and its relation to life only in terms of matter and energy (materialist theory), whereas others made sense of it in ways that were inclusive of supernatural meanings, in terms of God (Geisler and Feinberg, 1980; Pazmino, 2001), gods or other spirit entities. For example Woods' (2007, p.65) theoretical basis for her empirical research into spiritual experiences was built on the zoologist Sir Alister Hardy's arguments that spirituality ought not to be limited to, 'purely materialistic interpretations of Darwinian natural selection.'

The literature reviewed avoided conflating religion with spirituality (Kumar, 2005). However most of the literature acknowledged that for many people spirituality is juxtaposed with religious ontological and epistemological meanings and in part defined by their socialization within religious organisations (Gibbs, 2006; Tisdell, 2003). This is sometimes referred to as religio-spirituality (Moran & Curtis, 2004; Walker & McPhail, 2009). From a secular religious perspective de Souza (2004) has described spirituality as journey towards ultimate unity, a term which suggests social and developmental dimensions as well as supernatural and theistic connotations. Adding to this view, Thayer-Bacon (2003) says, 'Our religious beliefs represent our spiritual views, which influence the categories that we use to make sense of our experiences' (p. 256). Hancock, Bufford, Lau and Ninteman (2005, p.131) explain that, 'Spirituality has tended to refer to the subjective and internal or personal side of Christian faith, while religion at times has been used to refer to the more public and institutional manifestations.' In an article on spirituality in higher education White (2006, p. 2) says, 'This distinction between what is viewed as religion and spirituality represents a novel cultural shift and is resulting in a new and emerging Western social phenomenon.' Shields, Edwards, and Sayani (2005, p. 8), says,

*Eliminating all reference to belief systems results in an epistemology focused so narrowly on empiricism that it eliminates and marginalizes other, valid ways of knowing...those who make sense of the world through epistemologies that are*

*grounded in spirituality are often reduced to shame and silence, marginalized by the “truth” of a different epistemological frame of reference.*

Waaajman (2002) discusses the concept of a *theology* of spirituality. This includes the ways that spirituality is understood and practiced within religious associations through concepts of a relational process between God and people involving devotion and sanctification of the inner self. Waaajman (2002) discusses these and other aspects of spirituality within a range of religious traditions including catholic Christianity, Islam (literally meaning submission), bhakti yoga and bhaktimarga (the spiritual road) in Hinduism, and Buddhism. He also expounds Hellenistic meanings of spirituality associated with *ascesis* (physical training) which were related to personal purification, releasing the power of the mind and controlling one’s passions. In addition Waaajman (2002) discusses meanings of spirituality from non-religious, philosophical, and contemporary perspectives such as ‘movements of emancipation, liberation spirituality, peace spirituality, feminist spirituality and environmental spirituality’ (ibid. p. 364). Several of his conclusions are that

*Up until a few decades ago this word [spirituality] had a limited scope within a relatively small users group. Now it possesses a semantic reach which far exceeds the boundaries of a particular group... Spirituality is able to exceed the boundaries of the established religions and to open up new areas (ibid., p. 314, 364).*

Some of the literature I reviewed showed that people may incorporate into their spiritual beliefs and values a scientific, intelligent design perspective of the world and cosmos. For example Meyer (2009) a geophysicist with a doctorate in the philosophy of science, has argued for intelligent design based on the genetic digital code embedded in DNA. His stance for a non-material explanation to life is supported by Gitt (1997) and Behe (1996).

Spirituality is conceptualised therefore in a wide range of ways reflecting the pluralism and liberalism in society. A particular definition may include some perspectives but exclude others (Kamler & Thomson, 2006). Alternatively a definition may focus on the common elements pertaining to a variety of definitions. In some cases I noted that authors wanted to test a particular

theoretical framework or working definition of spirituality (Malone & Fry, 2003; Ramirez, 2009; Wellman, Perkins & Wellman, 2009; Woods, 2007). The sceptic Hertzberg (2000) suggests that spirituality is academically backward and Brown and Furlong (1996, p. 3), refer to spirituality as ‘a weasel word... a convenient catch-all, suitably vague and elusive of definition.’

However the literature showed many examples of academic discourse and research that adopted a less sceptical approach. For example de Souza (2004), believes spirituality is about enhancing and transforming lives. Dantley (2005), Fairholm (2000), Komives, Lucas & McMahan (1998), Sanders, Hopkins & Geroy (2003), and Sergiovanni (1992) provide a range of optimistic conceptualisations of spirituality in organisational leadership generally and educational leadership specifically. English, Fenwick and Parsons (2003, p 124), cite evidence that,

*environments that promote spirituality through learning are characterized by flexibility, creativity, newness, engagement, reflectiveness, and places where teacher and student stories of meaning-making are honoured.*

Nevertheless defining spirituality is not straightforward. There are numerous ‘definitions’ of spirituality in the literature. Wright (2000) suggests a working definition as, ‘our concern for the ultimate meaning and purpose in life.’(p. 7). A more complex definition is provided by Elkins, Hedstrom, Hughes, Leaf and Saunders (1988) suggest it includes nine dimensions, these being transcendence, meaning and purpose, mission in life, sacredness of life, material versus spiritual values, altruism, idealism, awareness of the tragic and the fruits of spirituality. Teasdale (2001) conceptualises spirituality as a personal commitment to a process of inner development that ultimately realizes the interconnectedness between self, others, the earth, cosmos and the mystical. Teasdale refers to this perspective as ‘inter-spirituality’ or contemplative spirituality according to Federman (2004, p.1). From another angle Alexander (2001, p.4), writes that spirituality can be defined in response to several interrelated existential questions.

*(1)The identity question. (2) The community question. (3) The moral question. (4) The question of meaning and purpose. What*

*is the meaning of life, its ethical vision or higher purpose? (5)  
The question of transcendence. What is worthy of ultimate  
commitment, loyalty, worship or devotion.*

Some writers define spirituality from a scientific perspective. Hyde (2006, p. 21) says, 'the scholarly literature indicates that spirituality is an ontological reality for human beings... studies in the fields of biology, neurological science and evolution support the case that spirituality is a natural human predisposition.' He suggests that spirituality is universal and the result of 'social evolution' (ibid. p.22). Watson (2000, p.96), claims spirituality is, 'a universal, human attribute, which is experientially based and that this inherent spirituality can be developed by general, *naturalistic* methods. Some of the literature links a definition of spirituality to spiritual intelligence. White (2006, p. 6) says that spiritual intelligence, 'empowers the individual to cope with and resolve life-world issues, while demonstrating virtuous behaviours such as humility, compassion, gratitude and wisdom.' White (2006) also believes that spiritual intelligence emanates from cognitive thinking that embraces both temporal and existential meanings.

Waaajman (2002) in his substantial treatment of the subject of spirituality describes fifty four forms of the phenomenon of lived spirituality alone, in which many sub-forms are described based around institutions, movements and specific persons. I found it interesting that some literature includes the concept of global spirituality (Rifkin, 2004). In explaining this universal perspective that includes inter-spiritual dialogue Waaajman (2002, p.4) says,

*The expectation is that the meeting of spiritual paths, the assimilation not only of one's own spiritual heritage but that of the human community as a whole, is the distinctive journey of our time.'*

How such disparate perspectives of spirituality can in fact converge remains unanswered in the literature.

In seeking to classify people's positions regarding their definitions of spirituality Culpit (2001) recognises four broad ontological orientations: rejectionists (those who reduce spirituality to a level of psychological defence or disturbance, and

may include atheists), constructivists (those who hold that absolute reality is constructed by human interactions, interpretations and inquiries, similar to agnostics and naturalists), pluralists (who recognise religious and spiritual reality but allow for multiple interpretations and paths towards it, similar to romanticism), and exclusivists (those who believe in the existence of God, a specific view of human spirituality and set of human values to guide human existence grounded in religious texts, which may include theists).

For the purpose of this thesis I found Tisdell's (2003, p. 28) approach to the meaning of the phenomenon of spirituality helpful. Avoiding the trappings of a definition, she emphasizes 'seven *assumptions* about the nature of spirituality in relation to education'.

- *Spirituality and religion are not the same, but for many people they are interrelated.*
- *Spirituality is about an awareness and honouring of wholeness and the interconnectedness of all things through the mystery of what many I interviewed referred to as the Life-force, God, higher power, higher self, cosmic energy, Buddha nature, or Great Spirit.*
- *Spirituality is fundamentally about meaning making.*
- *Spirituality is always present (though often unacknowledged) in the learning environment.*
- *Spiritual development constitutes moving towards greater authenticity and to a more authentic self.*
- *Spirituality is about how people construct knowledge through largely unconscious and symbolic processes, often made more concrete in art forms such as music, art, image, symbol, and ritual which are manifested culturally.*
- *Spiritual experiences most often happen by surprise.*

Through critically examining the literature, I recognised that the academic study of human spirituality possesses pragmatic pluralism (Frick, 2009) or multiple meanings (Paragment, 2005; Piedmont, 2001). Palmer (1993) refers to the paradoxical nature of spirituality. Reflecting on diverse philosophical, social, cultural and religious perspectives in the literature, has allowed me to see there are many and varied meanings that can be developed around the subject of spirituality. Geisler and Feinberg (1980, p. 77) write, 'some philosophers say that all facts are theory laden; bare facts are entirely meaningless. Indeed, the same fact can have different meanings when viewed by different people.' Furthermore, philosophical scepticism, challenged me to have an attitude of

curiosity and suspended judgment, and to tentatively interpret the phenomenon of spirituality because there might be other explanations as to why things appear as they do (Kamler & Thomson, 2006). I anticipate that spirituality in my research will be similarly complex and controversial.

### *Summary*

In this first section of my literature review I have provided a broad and inclusive ontological framework for addressing the question, ‘What does the phenomenon of spirituality mean? This framework acknowledges that in our pluralistic and post-modern society, diverse perspectives on spirituality exist as they have done throughout human history. For the purpose of my constructivist and phenomenological field study, spirituality is understood to refer to *individual and social behaviour*, including beliefs, values and attitudes that are perceived by participants to describe the lived experience of a person’s spiritual reality.

Perception of spirituality is subjective and is shaped and re-shaped by life experiences, social, cultural, economic, political, educational and religious ideologies and practices. It is also highly interiorized and developed through personal agency. This initial study of the literature allowed me to better understand, critically engage with, and appreciate other scholars’ perspectives, their arguments and evidence included or excluded from their research. It has also influenced my research intention to inquire into the lived experience of the phenomenon of spirituality in principal leadership as the participants perceive it.

## **Socio-political history of spirituality in public education in New Zealand**

### *Introduction*

In this section I critically discuss a socio-political, historical overview of spirituality within the New Zealand public education system. The overview highlights the early religio-spirituality conflict that existed in New Zealand at the inception of the national education system in 1877. New Zealand society has changed over the past 130 years presenting ongoing challenges and opportunities for a culturally inclusive conceptualization of spirituality that is broadly acceptable to secular public schools communities.

### *Sectarian conflict*

Debate concerning spirituality in public education in New Zealand is not new. From a European colonial perspective, most of the schools in this country arose out of the work of various Christian mission organisations, beginning in the early 1800s. Later, provincially administered public education was established and then phased out following the Abolition of the Provinces Act (1875). In its place, the central Government legislated to provide New Zealand's first nationalised, free, compulsory and secular primary education system via the Education Act of 1877 (An Encyclopaedia of New Zealand, 1966). The intention was to create a decentralised education system, administered via school committees and education boards, with the Department of Education overseeing matters at a Governmental level.

The socio-political context at beginning of public education in New Zealand could be described as an English-dominated, class-based society, influenced by spirituality from deeply sectarian and irreconcilable, mainly protestant and Catholic religious perspectives. There were also political tensions in the late 1800s relating to spirituality. The presence of influential French and Irish Catholics in the New Zealand colony were regarded by many with suspicion in terms of their loyalty to the British Crown. The implication of these socio-political tensions on New Zealand's public education are explained by the historian Hugh Laracy (1972, p. 1287). In the following quote, Laracy refers to Charles Bowen, the Minister of Justice and author of the Education Act of 1877 who presented the National Education Bill to parliament.

*The variety of energetic and powerful denominations meant that a comprehensive education system could not include religion. He [Bowen] emphasized that the Bill did not embody secularism as a positive value, but simply as a means of avoiding conflict.*

I understand Bowen's pragmatic political solution as a way of keeping the peace, with secularism providing a sense of neutrality within which the national education system could develop. However, from the outset the Catholic Church schools remained as a separate, private, educational organisation. They continued to do so until the Catholic schools became unsustainable and merged

with the State funded system under the provision of the 1975 Integrated Schools Act. Integration allowed them and other private, mainly independent Christian schools, to retain their special character and access government funding for their running costs.

In the decades that followed the Education Act of 1877, considerable public and political debate continued to arise regarding the inclusion or exclusion of religion, as well as debate over the use of the Bible in schools option within the primary school sector. Although the so-called secular clause in the 1877 Act, 'remained undisturbed through the two major revisions of 1914 and 1964,' (Ewing, 1972, p. 36), a thirty minute, Bible-in-Schools option (as it became known), was permitted and eventually endorsed, with certain conditions attached, in the Report of the Commission on Education in New Zealand, 1962 (better known as the Currie Report, pp. 696-697).

#### *Broader conceptualisations of spirituality*

Explicit acknowledgement of the importance of the spiritual dimension in educating children can be found in historical syllabus documents such as the New Zealand Department of Education (1929), Syllabus of Instruction for Public Schools, in which the following statement was made.

*There still survives in schools a great deal of the old-fashioned formalism that regarded education more as a mechanical process than as a means of securing for every child the fullest possible spiritual, mental and physical development. It is hoped that the present syllabus will give encouragement to those teachers—and fortunately there are many of them—who regard the child not as inanimate clay in the hands of the potter, or as an empty vessel sent them for filling, but as a soul, a personality, capable of being developed and trained for the wider service of humanity (p. 65).*

Alongside the religious-spiritual debate were related arguments as to whether or not schools, teachers and the curriculum ought to play a role in educating children in spirituality, morals, values and attitudes. If schools and teachers were responsible, how could it be achieved, without compromising the commitment to secularity? An example of this debate between religious-spiritual perspectives, values, morals and attitudes, can be found in the Currie report (1962), which stated, 'The ethical values and attitudes of what is best in our

society are for the most part identical with the ethical values and attitudes of Christianity' (Currie, 1962, p. 683). The Commission also stated that there should not be a too narrow interpretation of the term 'secular instruction,' as used in the Act, and acknowledged the importance of among other things, 'Christian standards and values as a unifying ethical basis of our community life' (ibid, p. 687).

Further evidence of historical discourse on spirituality can be found in the Report of the Committee on Health and Social Education (1977), also known as the Johnson Report, which has a section called, 'Moral, spiritual and values education' (pp. 32-37). It endorsed the many submissions it received which emphasized, 'the dangerous lack of basic values within our society' (p. 32). The report's non-partisan, inclusive writing style acknowledged non-Christian, Christian, and Maori perspectives. It also stated 'society expects positive leadership from its schools' in terms of education in values and recommended the 'fostering of a non-sectarian spiritual dimension in New Zealand state education be accepted' (ibid. p. 37). This is partially explained in the quote below, in which the connection between spirituality and religion is clearly but not exclusively affirmed.

*The schools we seek to encourage will foster a pride in heritage, in the growth of self-identity, and in seeking purpose and meaning in life...ultimate concerns...who am I? Why am I here? Where have I come from? Where am I going?...While we see these as being deeply religious questions, we prefer in this context to use the word spiritual as more accurately describing the type of school involvement we envisage (Report of the Committee on Health and Social Education, 1977, p. 35).*

The report also explains the committee's views and aspirations that teachers of all subjects would be able to incorporate some of this dimension in their teaching because 'a spiritual dimension... is part of being human' (ibid, p. 35). Finally it concluded by saying, 'We affirm that education in the dimension of morality, values and spirituality is essential to the total growth of each person' (ibid. p. 37). The significance of this latter comment is that spirituality is understood as related to, but not equivalent to values or morality. This expectation is partially consistent with the New Zealand Teachers Council code of ethics for registered teachers (2007, p.1), where it states that teachers will

strive to, 'Promote the physical, emotional, social, intellectual and spiritual wellbeing of learners.'

### *Emphasis on values*

Public education in New Zealand has had an enduring problem of on the one hand maintaining the secularity of public schooling, while on the other hand endeavouring to include a spiritual dimension that is not overtly religious, but is acceptable to a society imbued with 'moral pluralism' (Codd, 1980, p. 346). One way forward has been to emphasize social constructivist and naturalist approaches to the exploration of 'values' in the curriculum (e.g. Social Studies in the New Zealand Curriculum, 1997, p. 17). However, there are inherent problems with relativist views on morals or values, as Codd (1980, p. 380) says,

*Values are not justified merely on the grounds that they are accepted, even if such acceptance is held by the great majority of the community. Indeed, it may be discovered, through rational, open and disciplined discussion, that the basic values of the community provide a very insubstantial foundation upon which the teacher could stand.*

Similarly, in the new, New Zealand curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007), reference to morals has been avoided. Broad values, theoretically acceptable to the widest cross-section of our multi-cultural, pluralistic society are listed instead. These values in the new curriculum are stated as, 'deeply held beliefs about what is important and desirable' and are 'expressed through the ways in which people think and act' (ibid. p. 10). These points affirm to me that values do not appear in a vacuum, nor are they derived necessarily through consensus, neither are they only cognitive; but rather they are informed by evaluative judgments, and world-views, being expressed in all that we are as social human beings.

Understanding the values identified in the curriculum is not therefore simple or straightforward. For example, one of the values is, 'Integrity, which involves being honest, responsible, and accountable, acting ethically and to respect themselves, others and human rights' (ibid. p. 10). Ethical behaviour however, is not defined in the document, and is open to the question as to what should people base ethical behaviour on? A secular approach might be to argue that

ethical action should not be based on ‘feelings, religion, law, accepted social practice or science’ (Framework for thinking ethically, 1988, ¶ 8), but rather, principles of justice, utility, common good and virtue. But what is meant by virtue? One explanation of virtue is,

*A very ancient approach to ethics is that ethical actions ought to be consistent with certain ideal virtues that provide for the full development of our humanity. These virtues are dispositions and habits that enable us to act according to the highest potential of our character* (Framework for thinking ethically, 1988, ¶ 13).

Questions arise regarding what or who defines which virtues will be acceptable? Who determines the fullest extent of human development? I believe these questions lie at the heart of some of the challenges with relativistic and secular approaches to morals, values and virtues which are inherent in spirituality discourse. However I don’t believe a public education system can impose any one religious interpretation either, as this would be socially and politically unacceptable and untenable.

#### *Cultural perspectives in curriculum documents*

Following the New Zealand Curriculum Framework (1993), a substantive revision of all curriculum learning areas for the compulsory school sector was progressively rolled out over the following decade. The Health & Physical Education in the New Zealand curriculum (Ministry of Education, 1999), referred to spiritual well-being as an interconnected component to overall health. It also used the term hauora, a Maori cultural perspective of well-being. However the curriculum defined hauora more broadly as comprising,

*The values and beliefs that determine the way people live, the search for meanings and purpose in life, and personal identity and self-awareness. For some individuals and communities, spiritual well-being is linked to a particular religion; for others it is not* (Ministry of Education, 1999, p. 31).

This broader view of well-being was stated in the curriculum as one that was ‘recognised by the World Health Organisation’ (Ministry of Education, 1999, p. 31). This explicit inclusion in the curriculum of spiritual well-being can be understood historically, as a continuation of the discourse within earlier syllabi

and educational report documents. It can also be understood politically, being related to the Government's obligations to the Treaty of Waitangi (1840) principles. I believe it also reflected the importance of spiritual well-being to the general public as the definition implies.

Several other curriculum documents recognised the importance of spirituality in education. The Arts in the New Zealand curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2000), stated the Arts, contribute to our 'spiritual understandings' (p. 9). The social studies curriculum (Ministry of Education, 1997), stated in the achievement objectives for Level 3 how different groups view and use places and the environment,

*Students could demonstrate such knowledge and understandings when they give examples of different views (e.g. spiritual, historical, economic, aesthetic and recreational) that people hold about the same places and environments' (p. 39).*

Presumably the inclusion of spiritual perspectives was considered important to be repeatedly included in these curriculum documents. However in the latest all inclusive New Zealand Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007), the words spiritual or spirituality have been omitted altogether. No explanation is provided. This new curriculum continues only to acknowledge 'taha wairua' (literally, the spirit) within 'hauora,' (p. 22), one of four interdependent concepts within the health and physical education learning area. No definition of taha wairua or other spirituality perspectives is acknowledged. This is a substantial change. In the absence of official explanation I can only offer speculative reasons for this change that it reflects New Zealand society's increasingly liberal, pluralistic way of life, and a philosophy of education that is more humanistic and materialistic in its world view than that which permeated the earlier curriculum documents.

Another important historical document relating to spirituality in education within New Zealand is the early childhood curriculum, *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996). This curriculum was developed from a socio-cultural perspective, and is explicit and intentional in regard to the spiritual side in young children's education. Under a theme called 'kotahitanga' (p. 41), the 'holistic way children learn and grow' (p. 41), it states that learning and development will

be integrated through five features, the fourth being, 'recognition of the spiritual dimension of children's lives in culturally, socially, and individually appropriate ways' (ibid., p. 41). Te Whariki, which May (2006), asserts to be internationally acclaimed, acknowledges the value of learning that is inclusive of a spiritual dimension to life. While not defining spirituality, it acknowledges the structures and agency which shape it. The following quote illustrates this pluralistic and inclusive approach to spirituality without identifying specific beliefs or organisations.

*Adults should recognise the important place of spirituality in the development of the whole child, particularly for Maori and Tagata Pasefika families (p. 47).*

### *Summary*

My brief historical overview of spirituality in New Zealand educational literature has highlighted several important issues related to my research. Firstly, spirituality has been an important, enduring, though contested educational issue, particularly in terms of its value in learning and the development of children. This has been highlighted through a number of educational reports, curriculum documents, and the New Zealand Teachers Council (2007) code of ethics for registered teachers. It has also been illustrated through the separate Catholic school system and the 1975 Integrated Schools Act which have allowed some schools to receive operational funding while retaining their special spiritual character.

Secondly, the word spirituality has been written into educational documents in politically and socio-culturally acceptable, non-sectarian language in response to New Zealand's competing religious ideologies, obligations to Treaty principles, and pluralistic society. More recently, there has been a noticeable shift to exclude the term spirituality without explanation from the latest New Zealand curriculum (2007). This document has however retained the untranslated Maori term *taha wairua*. The curriculum also emphasizes a number of educational values which share common ground with spirituality. I believe this change reflects the dominance of humanistic philosophy in education as well as being a pragmatic response to inherent difficulties with spirituality. It acknowledges socio-cultural perspectives rather than religious institutional traditions, and

emphasizes the practice of values rather than the beliefs that might underpin them.

Thirdly, the educational literature identifies the influence of Christianity in New Zealand society historically, and that for some individuals, communities, and cultures, spiritual questions and spirituality in education may be linked to religious organisations and cultural cosmologies. However, the social and religious landscape of New Zealand has become more liberal. Naturalistic, philosophical, and scientific interpretations of reality and knowledge have become more prominent in New Zealand society. I agree therefore, with the statement in the health and physical education curriculum (Ministry of Education, 1999, p. 31), 'For some individuals and communities, spiritual well-being is linked to a particular religion; for others it is not.'

### **Spirituality within the workplace generally**

#### *Introduction*

This section of the literature review discusses how spirituality has become a popular theme in the workplace, especially within the Western developed world. Various studies have shown that spirituality can contribute positively to organisational leadership, culture, and performance (Ashar & Lane-Maher, 2004; Ashmos & Duchon, 2000; Barnett, Krell & Sendry, 2000; Covey, 1991; Driscoll, 2004; Fairholm, 2000; Giacolone & Jurkiewicz, 2003; Greenleaf, 1996; Korac-Kakabadse, Kouzmin & Kakabadse, 2002; Milliman, Czaplewski, & Ferguson, 2003; Mohamed, Wisnieski, Askar & Syed, 2004; Moore & Casper, 2006; and Twigg, 2004). Spirituality has also been recognised as helpful in patient care and patient recovery within the health sector (Levin 2001; Pargament; 2005; Piedmont 2001; and White & MacDougall, 2001). In the following section of the review I examine some of this literature into spirituality in the workplace and argue that it has application to the school workplace and principal leadership.

#### *Widespread presence of spirituality in workplace literature*

According to Giacalone, Jurkiewicz and Fry (2003), workplace spirituality is one of the fastest growing areas of new research by scholars. Driscoll (2004, p.1) writes, 'Over the past decade, interest in spirituality in the workplace has been growing rapidly and that's reflected in the popular press as well as in academic research.' Ashar and Lane-Maher (2004) believe that what is emerging is a new business paradigm which recognises the importance of the relationship between workplace success and spirituality. Dent, Higgins and Wharf (2005, p. 625-626) say,

*The topic of workplace spirituality is beginning to appear in organizational behaviour textbooks indicating that it is now being taught in a mainstream manner in both graduate and undergraduate business programs; and many conferences on this subject are now scheduled around the world.*

In qualitative medical and clinical research, 'recognition of faith and the importance of spirituality in human life,' is being seen as an important perspective (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 612). Although spirituality, is not quantifiable in terms of a slide for histological examination, White and MacDougall (2001, p. 41) say,

*Studies have shown that about 95 percent of humans have a spiritual belief system. It is vitally important to understand how patients see things if clinicians are to serve them effectively. By ignoring the patient's beliefs, clinicians are not treating the whole person.*

#### *The perceived utility of workplace spirituality*

I believe this growing interest in the role of spirituality in the workplace that be attributed to several factors. Firstly, the assumption that fostering spirituality within the workplace has utility, that spirituality can positively influence worker commitment, motivation, and retention (Fry, 2003). Another reason for the popularity of spirituality in workplace literature is the belief that it may be financially beneficial to assist with increasing productivity and organizational competitiveness in a capitalist dominated, world market economy. A third reason for this rise in popularity may be related the growing interest in holistic human capacity. This is explained by West-Burnham (2003, p.1) who says,

*One of the most significant trends in the study of leadership in recent years has been the move from the public to the private; from the external to the internal; from the tangible to the intangible...The next door to be pushed ajar – if not fully opened, is that of spirituality and its place in the debate about the factors that inform leadership.*

I found in the literature that a number of interdisciplinary research fields relate to the topic of spirituality in the workplace. For example Giacalone and Jurkiewicz (2003, p. 18-19), list thirteen related workplace-science research fields, covering such areas as generativity (adult commitment to making a positive contribution to future generations), agency and communion (individual-group participation, cooperation, attachment and connectedness), ethics and social responsibility (moral behaviour in the workplace) and workaholism research (avoiding detrimental effects on family and society through work-life imbalance). Furthermore they list another twelve inquiry questions derived from consideration of spirituality, some of which are: ‘What is the relationship between spirituality and ethical decision-making? Are spiritual employees motivated by different factors to non-spiritual employees? Do organisations need to recruit spiritual employees in different ways? To what extent is a person’s job satisfaction impacted by spirituality? Given their value structure, do spiritual employees demonstrate more pro-social behaviours, and/or fewer, anti-social behaviours? Do spiritual employees possess a different leadership style?’ (p. 21). Their concluding question is simply stated, ‘is spirituality significantly related to various aspects of organizational behaviour and performance, and if so how?’ (p. 21).

In response to such inquiry questions, Winters Moore (2008), lists a broad range of research literature that claims spirituality has been found to be positively linked to enhanced workplace cohesion, group self-sacrificing behaviour, and ‘increased physical and mental health of employees’ (p.86). The report also cites research that businesses that welcomed spirituality, ‘grew at faster rates, had higher rates of return, and increased their efficiencies more than comparative organizations who did not welcome workplace spirituality’ (p. 87). Research was also cited that claimed workplace spirituality positively correlated with employee retention, employee empowerment, improvements in ethical actions, and enhanced leadership (e.g. Moore & Casper, 2006).

Discourse into workplace spirituality in leadership is also linked with motivation theory, particularly intrinsic motivation. Elaborating on this Fry and Matherly (2006), define spiritual leadership as, 'the values, attitudes, and behaviours that are necessary to intrinsically motivate oneself and others, so they have a sense of spiritual survival and well-being, through calling and membership.' However, within their exploratory studies are assumptions that such spirituality in organizational leadership can be justified to increase worker productivity or as they express it, 'capture their motivation to go the extra mile - exert the extra effort required to achieve performance excellence' (p. 19). Extending upon this theme, Mitroff and Denton (1999, p3.) say, 'Spirituality could be the ultimate competitive advantage.'

Another interpretation of Fry and Matherly's work is that through the application of spirituality in the workplace, leaders may become more aware of and responsive to the needs of followers. This improved leadership may then be reciprocated in kind (feedback loops), through workers' increased commitment, punctuality and performance. In this way spirituality in leadership within the workplace may contribute to the development of mutually reciprocated, values-based, workplace cultures. This application is I believe more sustainable because if spirituality in the workplace were to be used as an exploitative managerial tool, it would undermine the values inherent in it. DuFour (2004, p.1) says, 'Leaders who are most effective in generating results will appeal not only to the bottom line, but also to the heart. In fact, one of the best strategies for improving results is connecting with people's deepest, heartfelt hopes.'

In support of Du Four's views, Fairholm (2000, p.26) argues that the heart of the leader's task is 'the spiritual side of self.' Fairholm suggests another side of leadership is the mind, which includes the leader's intellect, skills and techniques to manage programmes effectively. He contends that, 'leaders need to understand and do both', that is, 'both our head and our heart must be engaged' (p. 26). This is an important point in that spirituality must work interdependently with the leader's professional skills. There is however, an assumption here that 'heart' equates with spirituality, which may not always be the case. It could be argued there are numerous leaders who bring their love and

warmth from their heart so to speak, who don't necessarily believe that is connected to a perspective of spirituality.

### *Challenges with workplace spirituality*

I found in the literature several challenges to fostering spirituality in the workplace. For example, there is the challenge of a diverse workforce accepting a shared understanding of spirituality, especially in terms diverse socio-cultural and religious meanings associated with the term. Other concerns raised in the literature relate to ethical, philosophical and legal issues. Should spirituality *and* the workplace relate to two different worlds that ought to remain apart least they generate antagonism or division within organizations? This fear is based on the assumption that it will ignite sectarian conflict and or prejudice (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003). In recognition of these challenges, all of the research literature on spirituality in the workplace that I reviewed conceptualised spirituality within a post-modern, secular or humanistic ontological framework, focused on high moral values and behaviours that would mutually benefit individuals and the organization collectively.

### *Summary*

I found this field of literature on spirituality in the workplace helpful to my research in two ways. Firstly, it affirms that spirituality in the workplace has been taken seriously as a research topic. This fact adds some justification for my study into spirituality within school workplace contexts. Secondly, there appears to be a growing body of empirical evidence to suggest that spirituality may contribute positively to workplace organizations, leaders and employees. This evidence suggested to me that it was reasonable to expect that spirituality would be similarly influential within school workplace contexts.

My review of workplace literature also raised several concerns. It affirmed the difficulty with defining spirituality, and how to quantify spirituality with robust psychometric measures of the phenomenon. I also wondered if the interest in spirituality within the workplace was motivated by contradictory perspectives, a mixture of altruistic love towards people and a desire for financial and competitive gain. I wondered therefore how these concerns might translate through to public school workplace contexts.

## **Comparing and contrasting spirituality in leadership with other leadership styles**

### *Introduction*

In this section I focus on comparing and contrasting spirituality *in* leadership with other leadership styles. I discuss that fact that spirituality in leadership while receiving renewed interest in research literature is not entirely new as a concept of leadership. Many of the attributes associated with spirituality in leadership can be identified within a general treatment of leadership theory and within discourse on leadership styles. I also discuss several distinctions between spiritual leadership and spirituality *in* leadership, the latter being the focus on my research. This section of the review therefore clarifies my emerging theoretical framework for making sense of spirituality as an integral dimension of educational leadership.

### *Commonality and differences between leadership styles and spirituality*

The popular text on leadership theory by Razik and Swanson (2001), discusses leadership from a range of approaches such as personality traits; leadership behaviour, power and influence, and situational factors. Other popular themes include transformative and transactional leadership, leadership from cultural perspectives, and gender issues. However this text omits any explicit reference to spirituality. The reason for this omission possibly reflects the low status of spirituality within leadership theory a decade ago. However, the absence of the term spirituality in this text ought not to imply an absence of discussion on many of the characteristics and behaviours commonly attributed to spirituality in more recent times.

I found concepts associated with spirituality in a wide range of literature. Senge's (1990) emphasis on leadership developing vision, values, and modelling these to followers, and Bolman and Deal's (1991) view of leadership as a relationship with followers, are two examples. Furthermore, in reference to facilitative leadership, Lashway (1995, p.1) says, 'Successful facilitation may depend less on any particular set of behaviours than on the underlying belief system of the leader.' Fry (2003, p. 710) concurs with this commonality between

spirituality and aspects of leadership theory by saying, 'There appears to be considerable overlap between workplace spirituality and motivation based theories of leadership.'

I found through the literature review that there are a number of leadership theories and styles of leadership that share common elements with spirituality. Some of these are more obvious such as faith-based leadership (Dantley, 2005), transcendental leadership (Sanders, Hopkins & Geroy, 2003), and servant-leadership (Greenleaf, 1977, 1996). Ethical and virtuous leadership (Lashway, 1996), moral leadership (Sergiovanni, 1992; Thompson, 2004), authentic leadership (Cashman, 1998) and relational, and charismatic leadership (Dyer, 2001) also fit readily within spirituality discourse.

This commonality between leadership theories or frameworks is not unique to spirituality. For example Yoder (1997) refers to affective leadership in terms of charismatic leadership, moral/ethical leadership, caring leadership, servant leadership and spiritually centred leadership. The use of common terminology in the literature is supported by Dent, Higgins and Wharff, (2005, p. 628) who say there are 'many similarities between workplace spirituality theory and leadership theory' based on the fact that there are many 'dynamic dimensions or contexts for describing and measuring the phenomenon that closely resemble one another.'

Cooper (2005, p. 50) identifies common ground with spirituality in leadership when he describes transformational leaders as those who 'uplift the morale, motivation, and morals of their followers.' The transformational goal of moving followers to maturity and achievement through idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration, could readily apply to a spirituality perspective on leadership. However, there may be some differences between the two in that some of the literature is now critical of transformational leadership as being too leader-centred, not considering the needs of followers and lacking in detail as to how leadership influence affects followers (e.g. Lord & Brown, 2004; Yukl, 1999). This is possibly where spirituality *in* leadership may provide a useful way forward to the challenges facing the transformational approach.

According to Dantley (2005), faith-based leadership it is *not* conceptualised as leadership within a religious organisation or from one religious tradition. Rather he uses the term with a secular definition and a transformative application. Dantley provides a post-modern, Afro-American, perspective and affirms that ‘a critical faith actively interrogates the essentialisms that are produced through hegemonic rites, constructions and institutions within society,’ and faith in this sense is, ‘a spiritual behaviour’ (p. 6). His model of leadership identifies with intervention in order to bring about social transformation through greater equity and justice. His perspective repudiates the traditional notions of conservative, essentialist theology and argues that,

*A leader’s faith to see and faith in ideas and notions of democracy and social justice as well as his/her belief in the humanity of those serving in the school community can provide the fundamental steps for essential school reform* (p. 1).

Transcendental leadership theory, also illustrates common elements with spirituality in leadership. Sanders, Hopkins and Geroy (2003), explain that transcendental leadership integrates and extends the managerial and charismatic dimensions of transactional and transformational leadership with three dimensions of spirituality; these being, consciousness, moral character and faith. Transcendence in their theory is inclusive of six points of Kantian, humanistic philosophy regarding meaningful individual development. In their discussion they claim that their integrative leadership theory,

*brings spirituality out of the closet and places it where it belongs – in the mind (i.e. consciousness), the heart (i.e. moral character), the soul (i.e. faith) and daily accomplishments of the leader* (Sanders, Hopkins & Geroy; 2003, p. 29).

Exploring this theme of transcendental leadership further, Liu (2007), suggests that it is a paradigm that may tap into the fundamental needs of both followers and leaders. One way to achieve this is by motivation being focused on doing things for others which leads to an enhanced sense of purpose and belonging. He also suggests such leadership can develop,

*The leaders' spirituality, e.g., humanity, authentic concern for people, care, service, ego-less, consciousness, moral character, faith, and increasing the capacity for leaders to experience meaning and transcendental fulfilment (p. 9).*

Characteristics of spirituality in leadership also overlap with the theory of servant-leadership because its value system embraces humility and the maxim, to lead *is* to serve and to serve *is* to lead. A link between servant-leadership and spiritual leadership is made by Fairholm (2000, p.26) where he says, 'The new spiritual leadership paradigm sees transformation of self, others and the organization as important, even critical. This new leadership model is that of the servant leader... to function this way leaders need a change of heart (spirit), not just technique.' Greenleaf (1977, p. 13-14) describes the servant-leader by asking several questions.

*Do those served grow as persons? Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? And, what is the effect on the least privileged in society; will they benefit, or at least will they be further deprived?*

In clarifying relational leadership, Komives, Lucas and McMahan (1998, p. 1) say, 'We view leadership as a relational process of people together, attempting to accomplish change or make a difference to benefit the common good.' Such a view is similar to the altruistic values of many perspectives of spirituality. Charismatic leadership, according to Bast (2004) regards a relational leader within one or all of the following descriptors, each of which relate strongly to spirituality.

*An omnipotent archetype (leader as parent, whom they believe will nurture and guide them; Mystical (in touch with higher truths), who knows the way and knows the answers; Heroic (perhaps derived from past achievements), who can move mountains; Value-driven (concerned with the collective and able to empower it), who is pure in spirit (p. 1).*

Lashway (1996) defines six virtues of the virtuous and ethical leader, namely honesty, loyalty, respect, caring, justice and grace. These virtues resonate with many spirituality perspectives of leadership which also emphasize personal integrity, social justice and pastoral care by the leader towards those whom they

lead. But where do these virtues come from? Lashway suggests a leader's moral force comes from something much deeper than training programmes in ethics. 'It will be found in the narrative of that person's life...The moral force of leadership comes from a lifetime's search for meaning and purpose in human existence' (Lashway, 1996, p.124). Such a view allows for the inclusion of spiritual perspectives which is argued as helping to give meaning to a person's life and inform their professional practice (Dantley, 2005; West-Burnham; 2003). Furthermore, ethical leadership says Bast (2004), 'Uses power to service others, aligns vision with followers' needs and aspirations, and relies on internal moral standards to satisfy organizational and societal interests' (p.3).

Authentic leadership stresses the integrity between what the leader says and who the leader *is* as a person. This is also an essential aspect of spirituality in that one's inner beliefs, and values of the heart, ought to permeate meaningfully into professional practice. Cashman (1998) says, 'Personal characteristics that are denied, underdeveloped, or unseen by the leaders, are perceived clearly by everyone around them... Facing all facets of ourselves is the basis for others to trust us as authentic people and leaders' (p. 181). In elaborating on moral leadership Sergiovanni (1992), includes spirituality when he states,

*By giving more credence to sense experience and intuition, and by accepting sacred authority and emotion as fully legitimate ways of knowing, equal in value to secular authority, science and deductive logic, the value systems undergirding management theory and leadership practice will grow large enough to account for a new kind of leadership – one based on moral authority (p. 16).*

### *Spiritual leadership*

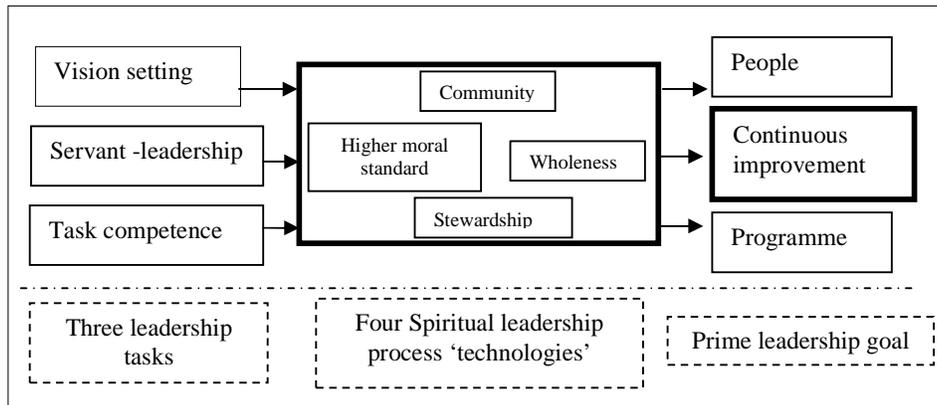
Similarity between spirituality in leadership and other leadership theories raised the question in my mind, 'How distinct is spirituality in leadership?' How robust is the concept of spirituality in leadership as a separate leadership construct? I found conclusive answers to these questions difficult. However, some researchers such as Fry (2005), claim spirituality in organisations and in leadership *are* being seriously considered by academics as moving beyond the level of good theories toward 'paradigmatic status' (p.619). That is, they are moving toward a 'philosophical and theoretical framework of a scientific school

or discipline within which theories, laws, generalizations and the methods to test them are formulated' (p. 619). Fry's views are based on his analysis of growing empirical research in the field of spirituality in leadership.

In explaining his theory of *spiritual leadership* Fry (2003, p. 693), says the purpose for such leadership is, 'to create vision and value congruence across the strategic empowered team, and individual levels, and, ultimately to foster higher levels of organisational commitment and productivity'. Fry identifies the concepts of calling and membership as two key follower needs. It is his belief that such vital follower needs may be satisfied within an environment that practices altruistic love. He explains this love in terms of the following descriptors, trust/loyalty, forgiveness/acceptance, gratitude, integrity, honesty, courage, humility, kindness, compassion, patience/meekness and endurance. Altruistic love, lies at the heart of his model which he believes influences vision and mission, and develops in followers a sense of calling to make a difference, setting standards of excellence, encouraging hope and faith, giving meaning to life.

Dent, Higgins and Wharff (2005, p. 628) say that Fairholm (1996, 1998) was, 'one of the first scholars to put the terms spiritual and leadership together to explain spirituality in the context of workplace leadership.' Since then they list other authors who have put forth their own spiritual leadership models relating to emotional intelligence, ethics, values and various characteristics such as charismatic, transformational and servant leadership. In reference to his own model, Fairholm (2000, p. 170) says, 'It is a holistic approach that considers the full capacities, potential, needs and interests of both the leader and followers as well as the goals of the organisation.' Fry (2005) believes along with Fairholm, that spiritual leaders help others make choices about the care of their body, mind, heart and spirit. That is, spirituality in leadership will exercise a holistic pastoral care towards followers. Fairholm (2000, p110) suggests as his hypothesis, that spiritual leadership is holistic and dynamic, a '*New leadership* keyed to enduring principles (Covey, 1992), is people-oriented, and focuses on service to all stakeholders. It concentrates on a few principles of human interpersonal conduct that elevate and ennoble the individual within the group.'

Figure 1: Fairholm's (2000) model of the spiritual leadership process.



Fairholm's analysis of the characteristics and elements of spiritual leadership (2000, p. 112), do provide some insight as to what spirituality *in* leadership might involve. His analysis has eight foci which are further described in terms of key words, a summary of which is as follows. 1. Leaders relating to the organization as a community- holistically. 2. Leaders demonstrating spiritual competence in terms of trust, credibility and power-balance. 3. Leaders helping others express their highest potential through capacity building while maintaining organizational health. 4. Leaders set the standards for excellence for the group in terms of positive affirmation, love, ethics, integrity and morals. 5. The leader is first a servant, then a boss and is focused on the liberation of those he/she serves. 6. Leadership is the process of living out deeply held personal values, of transcending ones self through honouring relationships, others and even that which is sacred. 7. Leadership is collective, shared or distributed power in which followers become united around the leader's vision. 8. Spiritual leadership involves visioning, sense-making and covenant making which are built upon sound values.

Explaining the model in more detail, task competence requires the spiritual leader to be competent in 'credibility, teaching, trust and inspiration as well as to be knowledgeable in the actual work of the group' (2000, p. 113-4). Encouragement of each member to reach their potential through communication rather than authorisation, a trust-filled workplace culture known for its justice and fairness, coupled with leader self-confidence in the moral rightness of the

organisation's mission, are some of the key proficiencies comprising task competence. Vision setting, is linked to other terms such as sense-making, mood setting, and optimism, reflected in a 'universal concern and respect for every individual' (ibid. p. 114). Furthermore, Fairholm (2000) asserts that 'spiritual leaders develop visions and mission statements that foster the development of a spirit of cooperation, mutual caring and dedication to work' (p.114) such that members of the organization feel intimately connected. However, he also states that such vision leading skills need to be unafraid to challenge the status quo when and where appropriate. In other words spiritual leadership doesn't always equate with peace, sometimes people need to be challenged and to become uncomfortable in order to grow and improve.

In terms of leadership processes, creating a harmonious community and personal wholeness, in which individuality and diversity are honoured is another key to this model. Spiritual leadership must set high standards of excellence in interpersonal conduct and work performance because the character of any organization is a reflection of its moral integrity. Fairholm (2000) believes spiritual leaders are charged with modelling and encouraging the living out of moral values and beliefs in the life of the organization. Stewardship is understood as a 'collective idea' (ibid. p. 115), in which spiritual leadership willingly distributes power to help the group succeed. Furthermore, stewardship from this perspective, is about serving the needs of others, not self, and of being a 'custodian of virtues' (ibid. p. 115). Fairholm's (2000) model suggests that spiritual leadership depends on consent freely given by followers within the organisation.

The final component of Fairholm's model is the goal of ongoing improvement of both the personnel and programmes within the workplace. Interestingly this goal is counter-weighted by an equally strong sense that spiritual leadership will 'strive for balance among work, family and professional areas of life' (ibid. p. 115). That is, spiritual leaders will 'focus on creating and maintaining organisationally healthy people' (ibid. p. 116). The point of emphasis in this model is not on increased training in managerial processes but rather 'one of education of the heart' (ibid. p. 116).

I found Fairholm's comprehensive theoretical analysis of spiritual leadership helpful in developing my conceptual understanding of what a spiritual dimension to organisational leadership might mean. However, I wondered how Fairholm's model might apply to spirituality in principal leadership in public school contexts. Some of the literature I reviewed used the terms spiritual and spirituality interchangeably. This raised another question whether there were distinct differences between spiritual leadership and spirituality *in* leadership. This led me to consider several key questions. Is spiritual leadership more intentional in its focus on that which is considered spiritual? Is spirituality *in* leadership, the focus of my research, more inclusive of various spirituality perspectives within a range of leadership theories and styles? Is spirituality *in* leadership emphasizing a personalized and integrated dimension existing in and through the role of leadership? Could spirituality *in* leadership provide leaders with a source for their meaning making, motivation and management and how to be transformational, relational, authentic, and moral in their particular style of leadership? Could spirituality *in* leadership provide a sense of enhanced personal identity, purpose and insight into human life and the way forward for an organisation's future? These questions emerging from the critical review of the literature helped me refine my understanding of spirituality as not one form of leadership but a perspective on leadership that invites leaders to integrate their personal perspectives of spirituality into their preferred leadership style.

#### *Theoretical concerns with spirituality in leadership*

When the renewed interest in spirituality was beginning to surface in the 1990s some writers said that much of the discourse on spirituality was ungrounded in research (Paragment (1999). For example, Giacalone, Jurkiewicz, and Fry (2003, p.7), identified four weaknesses the newly emerging paradigm of spirituality in leadership needed to address. 'The lack of an accepted conceptual definition, inadequate measurement tools, limited theoretical development and legal concerns.' In their view, research had tended to focus on either the attributes of spirituality or the functional activities associated with spirituality. They say that, 'a working definition of workplace spirituality must represent a consensus of these perspectives if it is to have utility' (p. 13). This was of particular interest to my research because I was interested in both the attributes and functions, as

well as trying to understand why and how the phenomenon was perceived to contribute to the role of principal leadership.

I identified other concerns in the literature. Benefiel (2005, p. 723) says a, 'more robust and sophisticated understanding of the spiritual aspect of spiritual leadership is required'. He goes on to question, 'whether conventional social science as it is now constituted, can even adequately measure spirituality' (Benefiel, 2005, p. 726). In response to these concerns other writers such as Forniciari and Lund Dean (2001, p.335), suggest spirituality ought not to be limited to positivist requirements. They,

*Challenge spirituality in organizations researchers to consider evidence about the phenomenon of spirituality at work, based on non-positivist ways of knowing... ethnomethodological techniques, qualitative techniques, and tradition-based stories, as more appropriate research methods than positivist methods.*

I found this argument by Forniciari and Lund Dean (2001) helpful because it supported my interest in understanding principals' and teachers' meanings of spirituality in their natural school contexts.

#### *Leadership influence and spirituality*

Another aspect of leadership theory relevant to my study is the topic of influence. Principals are expected to be influential on the development and maintenance of effective schools (e.g. Creemers & Reezigt, 1996; Gezi, 1990; Hallinger & Heck 1996, 1998; Mortimore, 1993; Scheurich, 1998; Water, Marzano & McNulty, 2003). According to Leithwood, Louis, Anderson and Wahlstrom (2004, p.17), 'Leadership is widely regarded as a key factor in accounting for differences in success with which schools foster learning of their students.'

Elaborating on school leadership influence, Southworth (2002, p.77) suggests three broad classifications of principal effects, namely direct effects from the principal, mediated effects through other variables and people, and reciprocal effects, whereby the principal and others become co-influential in the school. Adding to this McEvoy (1987, p.73) says, 'principals exercise leadership influence in subtle ways' making the perception of influence difficult. Principal

interactions with teaching staff are often informal, brief and fragmented, with principal-teacher exchanges not often lasting more than ten minutes. Elaborating on leadership influence Hallinger and Heck (1999), say some specific ways that effective principals create conditions for influence are by,

*Modelling curiosity about teaching methods and classroom processes...monitoring what happens in classrooms, looking and pupil data and observing teaching, and dialogue, that involves talking about learning and teaching, challenging conventional practices, identifying and valuing good teaching.*

The complexity of leadership influence is also highlighted by Maxwell's (1993) theoretical view of leadership. He believes there are five levels of influence, namely position, permission, production, people and personhood. Maxwell explains that before leaders can engage in organizational change and production improvement, the leader has to demonstrate competence in the position of the leader in terms of his/her job description, and build over time strong interpersonal relationships that lead to staff giving permission to being led so that changes can be made. When staff feel supported and cared for then their motivation and commitment ought to improve along with performance. People may follow their leader because of what he/she has done for them. The final level of influential leadership, according to Maxwell, is when the personhood of the leader is honoured and respected, not just for their works' sake but rather for their integrity, values and outstanding character. Influence from this perspective is not something imposed through positional power but can be consensual, through followers being inspired by the leader's authentic embodiment of high moral values and professional competence. I believe Maxwell's theoretical framework may be useful to understanding spirituality in leadership within school organisations because it shares common values and ideals associated with spirituality discourse.

Another aspect of influence attributed to spirituality in leadership might be critical reflection (Lane, Lacefield-Parachini & Isken, 2003). Reflective practice is regarded as an essential competence for all professionals according to Bell and Gillett (1996), and a vital skill for teachers (Ballantyne & Packer, 1995). Blasé and Blasé's (1999, p. 84) say, 'Principals can provide many of the critical elements that support reflective practice: rich opportunities for interaction,

shared reflection, and modelling for reflective practice. Reflection needs to be multi-level, going beyond surface identification and description, including critical analysis and future planning which leads to new action (Mezirow, 1991). Reflectivity is also linked to what Emmons (2000) and Zohar and Marshall (2000) refer to as spiritual intelligence (SQ). In linking reflective practice with spirituality, de Souza, (2004, p12) says, 'inner reflective learning and intuiting processes', are an important part of spirituality. Spirituality is often expressed, at least in part, through contemplation, meditation and critical self-assessment of one's journey through life. Given the importance of reflective practice in education and its commonality to spirituality, I believe that it may therefore be likely to be identified in my research into spirituality in principal leadership.

Leadership influence on interpersonal barriers is another important topic that I thought may overlap with spirituality. Yong (2002, p. 1) discusses how physical and psychological barriers often separate teachers from principals. 'This gap leads to incongruence in purpose, norms and expectations of the principals and teachers and the effect is detrimental to both teachers and pupils. Bridging this gap between principal and teachers is all too important a task for all principals.' I wondered whether spirituality might contribute to this question of barriers between principals and teachers, both positively in terms of removing them and perhaps negatively in terms of erecting more. I wondered whether spirituality might contribute to the development of a more holistic, relational school community through embracing values, attitudes and behaviours in caring and authentic ways. This was something I was curious to learn more about through my research.

In regard to relational influence, Blasé and Kirby (2000) report that one of the most effective leadership strategies influencing teachers was not positional power but, 'the power of praise' (p. 11). That is, the regular, sincere and appropriate recognition of teachers. Forty percent of the teachers surveyed by Blasé and Kirby (2000), identified leadership authority with negative emotional and professional outcomes such as resentment, mistrust and a break down in morale. Leadership power can also be effectively exercised through decision making, when it is preceded by collaboration and consultation (Leithwood, Thomlinson and Genge, 1998). Authority, if it is directed toward upholding the

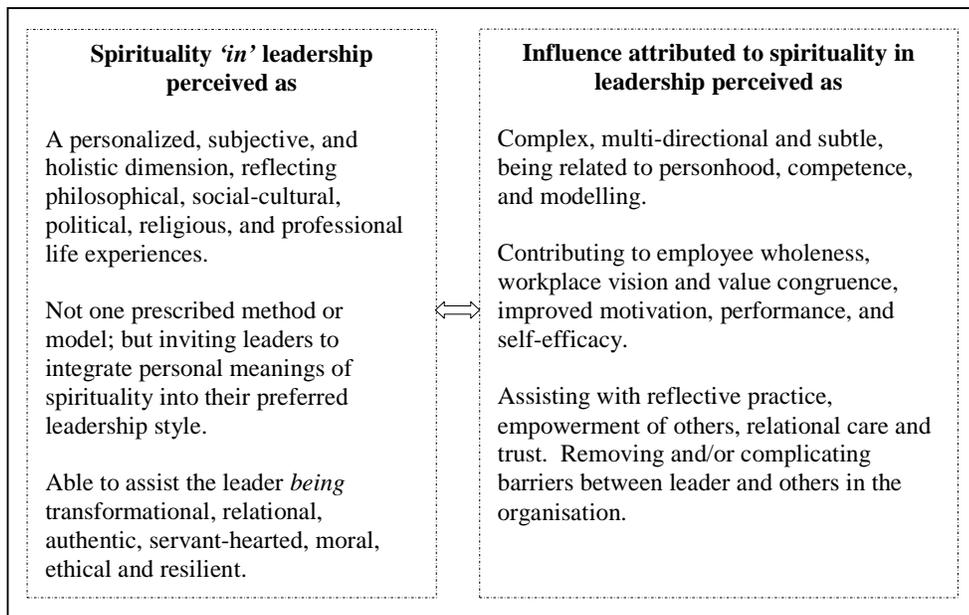
quality of the professional culture of the educational community rather than being used selfishly or as a manipulative tool can be compatible with the values and behaviours typified in spirituality discourse. Spirituality may inform the rationale for the way power is internalised by leadership, in terms of power to serve, power that is fair, respectful, consistent and constructive, rather than power to dominate and become proud. Bolman and Deal (1991) say that leadership wanting to be facilitative and share power will require richer perceptions of organizational life, the human need of participants, and the values, rites and rituals that provide members with a sense of community. However, while many characteristics of spirituality might be compatible with these perspectives into leadership power, spirituality may infuse its own power problems into organizations, whereby religious posturing or spiritual abuse of people's rights might be experienced.

Spirituality is also linked to the influential role of principal leadership relating to school-wide reform. Literature on community schools, care in schools and personalized schools, discusses the growing problems that many students experience namely, alienation, loneliness, disengagement and/or failure. This literature such as Marshak (1999), Noddings (1992); Sergiovanni (1993), and Strike (2000, 2004), discusses how leadership can address these issues and move towards the wider educational goal of growing children into 'good' citizens. Related to this discourse, Creighton (1999, p. 3) says, 'Leadership has evolved from a time when principals concentrated on what the school needed to do to a time when the emphasis must be on what the school needs to be, and on articulating a view of the future that is better than what currently exists.' Noddings (1992) suggests bringing what she calls the *sacred* back into democratic public schooling. She believes in a social interventionist role of education, that education can be a key to developing a caring society. She argues, 'our aim should be to encourage the growth of competent, caring, loving and lovable persons, a moral priority that our educational system ignores' (Noddings 1992, p. 14).

The literature reviewed affirmed to me that leadership influence is inherently complex, convoluted and 'multi-directional' (Southworth, 2002, p. 78). The literature also affirmed that spirituality can be linked with leadership as an agent

of influence in personal, social and organisational transformation. I predicted therefore that influence attributed to spirituality in educational leadership within my research would be experienced in similar ways. I also anticipate that influence from principal leadership would be through a number of factors and unlikely to be limited to spirituality alone. These deliberations about leadership influence impressed on me the need to keep an open mind when analysing the data and to draw tentative conclusions about the influence of spirituality from the findings.

Figure 2. Theoretical considerations of spirituality in leadership



*Is spirituality in leadership relevant to teachers and their teaching?*

My review of New Zealand educational literature showed that spirituality ought to be of interest to teachers, and their teaching. The New Zealand Teachers Council (established 2002), and its predecessor the Teacher Registration Board, describe broad definitions of being a teacher through the 'Satisfactory Teacher Dimensions' (1996), the 'Graduating Teacher Standards (2007b), the 'Code of Ethics for registered teachers' (2007), and its 'good character and fit to be a teacher' policy (2007a). All these documents contain aspects which explicitly or implicitly relate to spirituality.

For example some of the descriptors of good character include, 'displays respect for persons, cultural and social values, the law and the views of others; promotes

and nurtures the safety of learners within his or her care; is reliable and trustworthy in carrying out duties' (NZTC, draft policy, Good character and fit to be a teacher, 2007a). Part of the sixth Graduating Teacher Standards (2007b, p. 1), states that teachers will, 'Recognize how differing values and beliefs may impact on learners and their learning.' The Code of Ethics (2007, p.1) states, 'teachers will strive to... promote the physical, emotional, social, intellectual and *spiritual* wellbeing of learners.' The significance of this latter document is that it implies there is a universal understanding of spiritual dimension to human well-being. Student spiritual well-being is included as an integral and important factor of student well-being that teachers will actively engage with (strive to promote). It can also be inferred from this document that it would be unethical for teachers not to do so.

Also within the New Zealand context, Gibbs (2006) a retired professor of education at the Auckland University of Technology, writes about the importance of the spiritually aware teacher in his text designed for teacher education. In his discussion he affirms the holistic and integrated nature of human beings, and that through including spirituality in teaching and learning 'we are challenged to consider the purposes of education and what it means to be a teacher' (p. 204). He also believes that spirituality will influence teaching in a range of ways. For example through their sense of awe and wonderment in the learning process, their relational compassion, care and connectedness with students, and in seeking of knowledge through intuitive means. He cites a quote which says, 'Spirituality grows in classrooms when teachers see themselves as agents of joy and conduits for transcendence' (Gibbs, 2006, p. 205).

Further support for the meaningfulness of spirituality to teachers and their teaching is provided by Australia's national philosophy of education. This philosophical declaration implies that without a spiritual frame of reference people's understanding of the world may be deficient. There is also an expectation that teachers will be able to help develop children's spiritual world-views.

*Because a spiritual frame of reference enhances an understanding of the world, and because education is never value-free, schools are expected to cultivate the natural*

*reverence and wonder in young people, to help them explore why they believe what they believe, and to give them the capacity to analyse their own world-view and those of others* (National Declaration for Education, report summary, 2001, p. 1).

In England the Office for Standards in Education (2004, p. 4) states the importance of educating children in terms of their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development saying, 'It is *crucial* for individual pupils and it is crucial for society as a whole. Most teachers would see it as the heart of what education is all about – helping pupils grow and develop as people.' Even the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) affirms the importance of children's spiritual development and their spiritual and moral well-being, in at least five of its articles.

I believe this widespread acknowledgement of the spiritual dimension of children has some implications for teachers and principals educating and caring for their students. The literature cited in this sub-section of the review affirmed to me that being a teacher extends beyond knowledge of curriculum content and pedagogy. Being a teacher and engaging in teaching may be conceptualized as a holistic endeavour. As such, that which is spiritual may be perceived to be inherently meaningful to teachers and their teaching in various ways. For example understanding the beliefs of others, being caring, behaving in moral ways, and in promoting student well-being.

I believe it can also be inferred from this literature from New Zealand, Australia and England that spirituality will be meaningful to principal leadership in similar ways. This prediction is supported by Shields, Edwards and Sayani (2005), who explain that through the quality of a principal's relational connectivity with staff and students, based around key values and actions, collegial success can be fostered. In explaining this further they say, 'Relative to educational leaders, spirituality is shown in the way they care for, empower, reverence, and collaborate with teachers and students as they mutually engage in the work of the school'(ibid. p. xii). Further support for my conclusions from this literature can be found from a New Zealand Maori cultural perspective. Egan (2003, p.221) says, 'Education should primarily be about wairua [*the spirit or spiritual*

*wellbeing*]. Learning that does not impact on the wairua, will have little enduring value.’

### *Summary.*

At a theoretical and practical level, spirituality in principal leadership shares commonality with a wide range of leadership styles, values and behaviours. For example spirituality share common elements with moral, relational, transformational and servant hearted leadership. However some differences exist between spirituality *in* leadership and other leadership styles. The literature reviewed suggests influence attributed to spirituality *in* leadership to be complex, multi-directional and subtle stemming from the leader’s character and not primarily from his/her position of power. Spirituality is also predicted from the literature to be meaningful to teachers and their teaching practice.

## **Research into spirituality within educational leadership**

### *Introduction*

In this section of the literature review I critically discuss the small but emerging body of New Zealand and international research focused on spirituality within educational leadership. I begin by identifying the context in which the field of literature pertaining to spirituality in principal leadership has emerged. I then examine a range of nine studies from several countries in terms of their methodology and findings, identifying their relevance and contribution to my own research. In order to assess the work of other scholars, Kamler and Thomson (2006) list a range of important questions to assist in the process such as, ‘What is the argument? What aspect of the topic is spoken about and from what position? What evidence is used? What claims are made? How adequate are these claims and are there any blank and blind spots? These questions have assisted me to analyse the authors of the research, how it was obtained and the similarities and differences between them.

### *Historical evidence for spirituality in educational leadership*

Knowledge and practice of spirituality in educational leadership is not new. It can be found throughout the world in ancient civilizations and cultures, and

recorded in various ways. Some of this knowledge may be found in the writings of early philosophers (e.g. Plato, 428-348 BC) and sacred writings (e.g. the biographical accounts of the teachings of Jesus in the Bible). In New Zealand spirituality in educational leadership can be found in pre-European Maori culture being located within the oral stories, skills and practices of *tohunga* (Best, 1934). The word *tohunga* is, 'a generic term for an expert in various fields of human endeavour' (Walker, 2004, p. 66).

In terms of early European New Zealand history, spirituality in educational leadership can be traced to the early 1800s when bilingual schools were first run by various Christian missionaries for local Maori children and adults (e.g. Joseph Matthews, CMS, Kaitaia, 1833). During a later period of provincial education boards and since the inception of national public education in 1877, spirituality in school based educational leadership in New Zealand has continued through individual principals who embrace a wide range of cultural, secular and religious perspectives. Although biographical and autobiographical documents exist about educational leaders in New Zealand's history, I could find no record of *research* specifically focused on spirituality within educational leadership relating to these earlier periods of this country's history.

#### *Recent emergence of spirituality in educational leadership*

International academic research and discourse into various aspects of spirituality within education has emerged relatively recently, over the past two decades. It has focused on topics such as matters of the heart, having a high moral purpose, and the importance of values and care of people in education. Some writers have used words like sacred, faith, divine, soul, spirit, spiritual and spirituality in discourse on school-based education reform. (e.g. Dantley, 2005; Du Four, 2004; Flintham, 2003; Hoyle, 2002; Kessler, 2000; Kofman & Senge, 1995; Sergiovanni, 1992, 1993, & 2000; Noddings, 1998; Palmer, 1993, 1998, 2004; West-Burnham, 2002). There is also an extensive body of literature on children's spirituality, a field outside the scope of this review (e.g. International Journal of Children's Spirituality).

This growing body of literature has contributed to what some claim is a shift in emphasis from what schools must do to what school communities must be

(Creighton, 1999). Most of this literature engages with spirituality in education from non-religious, humanist, secular perspectives (e.g. Jones, 2005) with some including sacred perspectives, a term that has transcendent meanings but not limited to any one religious narrative (e.g. Noddings, 1998). This international trend has influenced New Zealand, with the emergence of literature pertaining to spirituality in teacher development (Gibbs 2006), spirituality in the physical education and health curriculum (Egan, 2003), nurturing spirituality in classrooms (Fraser 2005, 2007; Fraser & Grootenboer, 2005), spirituality linked with philosophy, power and authenticity of principal leadership (Dixon, 2002) and Maori spirituality in education (Dillard, 2006; Fraser, 2004; Pere, 1997; Smith 2000). However, there is still a paucity of research specifically focused on the phenomenon of spirituality in principal leadership and its perceived influence on teachers and teaching.

*Spirituality in educational leadership remains under-researched*

That the role of spirituality in principal leadership and its influence on teachers is under-researched both in New Zealand and internationally. Woods (2007), based at the school of education in the University of Aberdeen, writes, ‘There is relatively little empirical work and nothing which gives attention in depth to the significance of spiritual experience in educational leadership’ (p. 135). From an American perspective, Ramirez (2009) says in her doctoral literature review, ‘the literature is quite limited in terms of clear cut examples of what spiritually-centred leadership looks like in practice’ (p. 4). Furthermore Mulford and Edmunds (2009), in their extensive review of research to determine the best conceptual models for successful school principal-ship in Tasmania, Australia, cite the American Educational Research Association’s task force for the development of an agenda for future research on educational leadership. In their review of this work, Mulford and Edmunds say,

*The authors [Leithwood and Riehl, 2003] point out a number of aspects of school leadership that have not been the subject of much formal research and/or that are drawn from other paradigms and are not addressed in their analysis. These aspects include moral and spiritual dimensions of effective school leadership (p. 20).*

Reasons for spirituality in educational leadership being under-represented in the research literature reflect people's presuppositions toward the subject. For example, Creighton (1999), a professor and researcher at the department of educational leadership, Idaho State University, suggests in his review of literature that there has been, 'an over-emphasis in administrative theory, research and training on the technical and rational aspects of leadership and a neglect of the moral aspects of educational administration' (p. 1). While I agree with Creighton when he says principals are not, 'neutral, technical bureaucrats' (p.3), I also believe that broader conceptualizations of the role of school leaders have been researched and well publicized, although not necessarily using the term spirituality.

Tisdell (2003) suggests, 'perhaps the prior silence on the topic of spirituality in areas of academic research is due not only to the difficulty of defining spirituality, but also to the ambivalence of many who work in the academic world that has emphasized rationality and the scientific model for most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century' (p. 25). I agree with this view and believe another reason for spirituality in educational leadership being under-researched is the public's perception of spirituality being associated with religious institutions. In the United States, the First Amendment of the Constitution prohibits the making of any law respecting religion, and this may have negatively influenced the development of spirituality as a legitimate topic within public education research. It is not unexpected therefore that spirituality in public educational leadership lacks a strong research history and is not well understood (Fullan, 2003; Starratt, 2003; Yob, 2004).

#### *Overlap with general research into educational leadership*

Although explicit use of spirituality in educational leadership is under-represented in literature it is not true that many of the characteristics associated with spirituality are to be viewed in the same way. Many of the characteristics perceived to be linked to spirituality have been identified in the general field of educational leadership literature (e.g. Fenwick 2005; Leithwood, Jantzi & Steinbech, 1999; Southworth 2002.) but under different terms such as relationality (Dyer, 2001), care (Duignan & Bindi, 1997), moral leadership (Sergiovanni, 1992) and authentic leadership (Cashman, 1998). The recently

published Best Evidence Synthesis document on school leadership and student outcomes (Robinson, Hohepa & Lloyd, 2009), provides a good example. This synthesis involved a comprehensive analysis of 134 New Zealand and international research studies and reviews. In the report there are a number of important leadership themes identified such as relational trust, integrity and modelling qualities of leadership. Each of these themes shares common ground with discourse on spirituality yet in the report itself, spirituality is not used once.

Furthermore, Rossow and Warner (2000, p. 24) identify from research literature in the United States, three broad requisites for *instructional leadership*, namely 'personal, functional and contextual requisites'. The latter requisite is described as having a well-reasoned philosophy, high moral purpose, a collaborative leadership style and educational values. I believe each of these descriptors shares common ground with characteristics attributed to spirituality. A qualitative, empirical case-study by Gibson (2005, p.68), into the role of a New Zealand primary school principal in leadership in teaching and learning, affirmed the presence and importance of these requisites.

#### *Quantitative research*

Notwithstanding these similarities between spirituality and other leadership characteristics I reviewed several quantitative studies that have intentionally researched spirituality in educational leadership. For example, Malone and Fry (2003) from Tarleton State University, undertook a quantitative field experiment in their local central Texas school district, to 'determine if there was a relationship between the qualities of spiritual leadership and teacher organizational commitment and productivity' (p. 5). Their intention was to engage with two schools in the difficult task of organizational transformation in which significant changes would be made to the workplace 'environment, vision, goals, strategies, structure, processes and organizational culture (p. 6).

Underpinning their method were Senge's (1990) five disciplines of learning organizations and Fry's (2003) theoretical work on spiritual leadership as a causal model for organizational transformation. This model was linked to intrinsic motivation theory and incorporated a number of concepts including 'vision, hope/faith, and altruistic love, theories of workplace spirituality, and

spiritual survival (p. 8). Malone and Fry (2003) explain the practical meaning of some of these concepts by saying,

*Creating a vision wherein leaders and followers experience a sense of calling in that their life has meaning and makes a difference; Establishing a social/organizational culture based on the values of altruistic love whereby leaders and followers have a sense of membership, feel understood and appreciated, and have genuine care, concern, and appreciation for both self and others* (p. 8).

This research was based on the belief that spiritual leadership could positively contribute to the needs of school personnel. They believed the practice of spiritual leadership could develop in people a sense of calling and membership leading to greater congruence in terms of their shared vision and values, as well as improved individual, team and organizational empowerment' (p. 8). In summarizing their research design and results, Malone and Fry (2003, p.2) say,

*Our field experiment initially examined 229 employees from three elementary and one middle school to test and validate a general casual model for spiritual leadership, employee spiritual survival, and organizational commitment and productivity. A one-year longitudinal field experiment was then conducted with two of the original schools with an OT [organizational transformation] visioning/ stakeholder analysis intervention, performed in one school with the other as a control. Initial results show strong support for the model and the intervention.*

A closer examination of their results shows the school which reported high levels of vision and altruistic love also indicated high levels of commitment, motivation and retention of staff. The other school which lacked vision and love experienced a noticeable deterioration in its organizational culture. This school was marked as 'a very intimidating, conflict ridden environment' (p. 16). In a subsequent report, the principal of the first school said, 'Everything we did as a campus was a result of the campus mission and values which was a direct result of our work with the spiritual leadership theory' (Malone & Fry, 2003, p. 16). However, in their conclusion the researchers concede, 'the conceptual distinction between spiritual leadership theory variables and other leadership theories and constructs must be refined' (p. 18). Secondly, they point out that although there was evidence validating value-based leader behaviour having

positive affects on ‘follower motivation and work unit performance’ (p. 19), more research is needed in terms of linking spiritual leadership to such effects.

This research highlighted several important implications for my research. Firstly it identified that non-religious spiritual dimensions within educational leadership can be positively influential on teachers in a range of psychological and professional ways. Secondly, it confirmed that attributing influential effects quantitatively to spiritual dimensions of leadership is complex, being difficult to isolate from other variables. Thirdly it made me curious about the socio-cultural and interpersonal contextual dynamics operating within each of the two schools and how these shaped the interpretation and practice of spiritual leadership. I wanted to learn more about specific critical incidents whereby participants perceived spiritual dimensions in leadership to be influential and why. There was also an underlying assumption in Malone and Fry’s (2003) report that spiritual dimensions are necessarily positive. I wondered if there were situations where participants felt disaffected by expressions of spiritual leadership. Lastly, I wondered about the spiritual leadership model being promoted to transform schools. Could spiritual leadership be misused as a managerial tool to exploit teachers’ commitment and productivity without improving other conditions of employment?

Another quantitative study relevant to my research is that by Wellman, Perkins and Wellman (2009), assistant professors from Northwestern State University Los Angeles. They researched the question, ‘What is the relationship, if any, between educational leaders’ spirituality and leadership practices?’ Spirituality was defined as an ‘independent variable’ (p. 2), and measured by the inventory on spirituality which was developed by Rayburn and Richmond (2003). This inventory included three subcategories called caring for others, transcendence, and seeking goodness, truth and forgiveness. Five leadership practices were selected based on the work by Kouzes and Posner (2003). These were described as, ‘challenging the process, inspiring a shared vision, enabling others to act, modelling the way, and encouraging the heart’ (p. 2). Together these five practices were identified as the dependent variable. The data was gathered from a survey of 71 participants out of 100 randomly selected, Texan school principals (35 females and 36 males) during 2004-5. The data was analysed

using parametric and non-parametric statistical operations, including a bivariate correlation analysis.

Wellman, Perkins and Wellman (2009) say in their online empirical research article that the findings yielded, 'statistically significant relationships between spirituality as measured on the inventory on spirituality and the five leadership practices. More specifically, the findings showed a relatively strong relationship between spirituality and modelling the way; a significant relationship between spirituality and inspiring the way; a strong relationship between spirituality and challenging the process; a moderately strong relationship to enabling others to act; and a moderately strong correlation between spirituality and the leadership practice of encouraging the heart. Furthermore, there was a stronger effect between the horizontal or interpersonal dimensions of spirituality and leadership than the transcendent dimensions.

In the discussion of the findings, the authors say, 'The results of this study revealed that spirituality and good leadership practices are correlated at a very significant level for the participants in the survey' (p. 3). In their concluding remarks, the authors indicate that an empowered spiritual, scholar-practitioner might be an ideal blended form of leadership, because 'spirituality is having an anchor that provides the courage to do that which is right for others in a manner that is caring, just, equitable and democratic' (p. 3).

These findings are important to my research in several ways. Firstly they show an empirical link can be established between a particular construct of human spirituality and educational leadership praxis. The findings suggest that this link can be positive, and complementary alongside 'good leadership'. Further reading revealed that the inventory developed by Rayburn and Richmond (2003) intentionally excluded religious dimensions of spirituality which were placed under a separate list. The research does not explore the subtle, context specific ways that spirituality works within school leadership praxis, and the specific ways that teachers and their teaching might be affected. This research identified the prevalence of certain practices but I am curious as to why the participants practiced them. I also wonder whether in fact spirituality can be neatly made into

an 'independent variable' from leadership practices such as inspiring a shared vision and modelling the way.

#### *Mixed methods*

Another relevant research study, also from England, was conducted by Woods (2007), an Honorary Research Fellow in the School of Education at the University of Aberdeen, Scotland, who examined,

*The importance of spiritual experience as a phenomenon which enables leaders to be better resourced internally and find deeper meaning, and to provide evidence of the significance and influence of spiritual experience for educational leadership in schools (p. 135).*

This empirical study gathered data from surveys from 244 primary, middle and secondary school head-teachers within three local education authorities (LEAs) in England, a response rate of 43%. Of this sample, 54% of the headteachers came from non-denominational schools, 45% from Church of England and Catholic schools and 1% from Jewish schools. The self-identified religious beliefs of the headteachers in the sample were reported as 76% Christian, 15% agnostic, 5% atheist and 4% described as 'other,' which was consistent with the religious demographics of the total head-teacher population within the three LEAs. 49% of the participants identified the importance of spirituality as very important personally, 36% of some importance, 8% of little importance, and 6%, not important.

The research also obtained further interview data from 7 of the headteachers who were selected by theoretical sampling (Silverman, 2001). This sample included 2 agnostics, 1 atheist, 1 humanist, as well as 3 headteachers identified with Christian religious beliefs. There was a balance of male and female headteachers and type of schools. Spirituality was perceived to be 'very' important to the atheist, one of the agnostics and two of the religious headteachers and of 'some' importance to the others. All seven of these participants affirmed that they often had been conscious of and perhaps been influenced by some power, whether God or not, which may either appear to be beyond their individual selves or partly, or even entirely within their being.

In summarising her findings Woods (2007) identified that spiritual experiences, vary widely in intensity and frequency and are ‘not confined to religious believers’ (p. 151). Furthermore, Woods says that spiritual experiences of the type that ‘appear to connect with some spiritual power, enhance capacity for practical action and increase ethical sensitivities and orientation are widespread among headteachers’ (p. 143). The findings also suggest that spirituality contributed in a variety of ways to headteachers’ resources and to the way they ‘imbued spirituality in their role’ (p. 143). Spirituality in the majority of these headteachers was perceived to contribute towards shaping, sustaining and informing their outward action. Approximately 2/3 of the participants disagreed that spirituality was an ‘entirely private matter’ (p. 149) and nothing to do with their job as head-teacher. 46% of the 244 headteachers were of the view that spirituality was a natural dimension of school leadership. 30% were uncertain.

Underpinning this research was the theoretical work by the American humanist, psychologist, and philosopher William James and Sir Alister Hardy, a former professor of natural history at the University of Aberdeen. Woods (2003), says in her thesis that Hardy viewed, ‘the human capacity for sensing the spiritual’ through the perspective of a Darwinian theory of evolution (p. 65) but that he argued ‘against purely materialistic interpretations of Darwinian natural selection,’ and that ‘it is not valid to conclude that man’s spiritual side is simply the superficial by-product of material processes (p. 65).

Although Woods (2007) believes there is substantial evidence for the existence of spiritual experiences (e.g. Hay & Hunt, 2000) she also cautions that, ‘it is important not to make simplistic associations between spiritual experiences and attitudes and attributes of leadership; spiritual experience is not the only factor to influence attitudes to spirituality and leadership’ (p. 136). In her literature review, Woods (2003) acknowledges that the reality of spiritual experience is contested by a range of arguments which include the subjective nature of people’s claims and their lack of consistent confirmability. Other arguments discussed by Woods are socio-cultural explanations and reductionist arguments. This latter argument holds that people’s assertion of spiritual experiences can be explained ‘more plausibly by reference to natural (and often pathological)

factors' (p. 77). In the conclusion of her discussion on these arguments Woods (2003) says,

*We are dealing with a legitimate phenomenon, that is there are scientific grounds for concluding that what are studied as spiritual experiences indicate a phenomenon of some sort that can be taken to exist (p. 78).*

Limited to its context in England, Woods' (2007) research provides some important considerations for my study. Firstly, the findings affirm the presence of many perspectives (religious and non-religious) and diverse experiences (theistic and non-theistic) relating to spirituality. They also show wide ranging attitudes regarding the perceived significance of the phenomenon as a dimension to principalship. The research argues for the scientific credibility of spirituality and that the phenomenon may have widespread relevance to school leadership in terms of its contribution to headteachers' engagement with and resilience within their roles. A number of results from her survey and interviews affirmed that spirituality is not necessarily a private or natural part of leadership. The methodological approach of including a broad representative survey as a way of informing direction and subsequent sampling for more in-depth interviews appears to add credibility to the findings. I also noted there was an absence in the data of teacher voice and the influence spirituality in headteachers was perceived to have on other staff in each school organisation.

#### *Qualitative research*

The fourth example of research into spirituality and educational leadership is a qualitative study conducted by Conrad, Brown and Crockett (2006), three academics from universities in New York, Pittsburgh and Florida. Their research focused on the life histories of five outstanding Caribbean, male, educational leaders, working within their Caribbean regional contexts. The criteria for the selection of these participants stated that each had, 'a national reputation for excellence through their advocacy, innovation, referent knowledge, and unquestionable contribution to the improvement of the quality of education at a national level' (p. 2). Of the five participants involved, two were principals, one of a special school and one of a regular school. Two were

college professors and one held regional and national educational responsibilities.

The theoretical framework for leadership and spirituality underpinning their qualitative inquiry was complex and not clearly defined. For example, the authors state (Conrad, Brown and Crockett, 2006, p. 3), 'it is within this context of leadership as motivation, as transactional, transformative and transcendental (Sanders, Hopkins, & Geroy, 2003) that this study shares the primary lessons of these five educational leaders. They also assert the following claim but without addressing the definitional problems of the term spirituality.

*The positive connections between leadership and spirituality have been extensively investigated and established. Researchers include but are not limited to, Fleischman's 'vocational' and 'social membership' aspects (1994); Fairholm's 'servant-leader/follower/organization triad' (1998); Giacolone and Jurkiewicz's 'interconnectedness and interplay in organization, team, and individual values' (2003); Kurth's 'spiritual practice dimensions' (2003); and Pfeffer's 'workplace practices that sustain values' (2003).*

Notwithstanding, the authors elaborate on their conceptual understanding of spirituality by saying that they believe it is linked to morality and to transcendental psychological awareness, and that these aspects of spirituality are 'not analogous to religion' (p. 3). The following quote provides a good summary of their pre-suppositions.

*Spirituality reflects a more transcendental awareness; an attitude or way of life that recognizes what we might call spirit but without the institutional affiliation (Noddings, 1995). Spirituality exudes the presence of a relationship with a higher power or being that affects the way in which we conceptualize and interact with the world (Fry, 2003). Spirituality is described as the source of one's search for meaning in life and a sense of connectedness with the world (Zinnbauer, Peggament, & Scott, 1999). Spirituality has also been referred to as a "meaning system" by Solomon and Hunter (2002) in that it asks the question: What is my purpose and role for my students?(p. 3).*

The research design focused on in-depth, semi-structured interviews to obtain a rich description of each participant's life history to ascertain the shaping influences upon them as leaders and the characteristics of their educational

leadership beliefs and practice. The researchers used an inductive, constant-comparative model, for analyzing and coding the participants' narratives into themes. Four aspects of educational leadership were found to be common to all participants: Leadership as developmental, advocacy, caring and responsiveness, and sense of responsibility. Furthermore, three main themes emerged from their stories these being, community connectedness, the role of families and other mentors, authenticity, moral and spiritual awareness. Some of the specific findings stated that participants' 'value of service and attitude towards the community of individuals and a higher calling, illustrate moral awareness and spirituality, which is considered fundamental to transformational, caring and authentic leadership' (ibid. p. 10). Moreover the findings showed 'spirituality attests to a readiness to goodness, through helping others and concern for relationships and communication' (Conrad, Brown and Crockett, 2006, p. 10).

A number of important issues from this study apply to my own research. Firstly it affirmed to me the value of qualitative inquiry in obtaining rich contextual meanings that lie behind people's perceptions and practice in educational leadership. Secondly, it raised an issue of inquiry limited to male only perspectives of spirituality in educational leadership. Thirdly, it drew my attention to cross-cultural research and the potential limitation on both researchers and participants when the researchers are outsiders geographically, linguistically, socially and culturally. Fourthly, the research highlighted the place of pre-suppositions in social science inquiry, particularly in terms of what spirituality was and was not. I felt curious as to how these pre-suppositions may have influenced the data obtained and the meaning derived from the men's stories. For example the authors say,

*All five participants stress the importance of being genuine and trustworthy. They link genuineness with some dimension of morality. Whereas there is no thick description of morality, spirituality, or religion in the stories of the men, three of them--Elgrin, Avron, and Ramesh--are all very active in their respective churches and related community organizations. (p. 10).*

This quote raised several further questions. Did this mean that morality, spirituality, and religion were not deeply relevant to their educational leadership life stories? Alternatively, did this lack of a thick description imply that the

topics of morality, spirituality and religion were not easy for participants to articulate within the context of their educational leadership practice? Thirdly, could the pre-disposition of the researchers to separate spirituality from religion and religious institutional affiliation, have contributed to this absence of a thick description? In other words, did the participants feel invited to talk about such connections if they existed? The insights and questions derived from this research helped me therefore, to appreciate the difference between qualitative and quantitative inquiry, and to think critically about whose interests are being served, and what knowledge is being included or excluded.

A fifth example of research acknowledging spirituality in educational leadership is the ethnographic study of a principal by Keyes, Hanley-Maxwell and Capper (1999), academic researchers based in two universities in Wisconsin. Their qualitative study focused on a female principal of a special education school in a Midwestern city in the United States. The context of their inquiry was inclusive education (equal opportunities for children with disabilities) and in particular, empowering principal behaviours.

The research method incorporated a longitudinal approach, gathering data from interviews and surveys over a fifteen month period, and involving over thirty participants including teachers, special education teachers, teacher aides, parents, children, and administrators. The findings affirmed the importance of the principal stimulating on-going responsive critique by staff of their practice while at the same time developing a supportive, just and democratic school environment in which such reflective practice was able to operate safely. The authors also cite a statement from the principal, who said, 'Spirituality is the core of my leadership' (p. 203), suggesting that it was both a significant and integral part of her personal self and professional practice, working from the inside, out.

The conclusion of their research emphasizes that, 'Empowering principal behaviours are under-girded by a spirituality grounded in six beliefs: valuing personal struggle, recognizing the dignity of all people, blending the personal and professional, believing people are doing their best, listening, and dreaming' (p. 203). These findings suggest that in this case, spirituality in educational

leadership was perceived as highly integrated. This may explain some of the challenges acknowledged in the two previous research reviews in terms of identifying spirituality as a singular causative effect in leadership. Furthermore these concluding statements link spirituality with beliefs that inform professional practice. That is, they acknowledge the importance of cognitive predispositions and that externalised professional leadership practice is informed by what the leader believes about people and the best ways to work together to achieve shared goals. Another significant finding was the importance of the degree of congruity between the principal's stated beliefs and observable behaviours. The authors assert the effectiveness of spirituality in the principal's leadership and her influence as leader, were linked to this 'integrity' (p. 205).

This study raised several important considerations for my research. The first was the potential for spirituality in educational leadership to be intentionally and significantly integrated into all of a person's professional practice. This was similar to Woods' research (2007, p. 143) where she said headteachers 'imbued spirituality in their role' and quite different from the conclusions drawn from the Caribbean study and the less personalised quantitative study by Malone and Fry (2003), which looked at spiritual leadership as a tool to bring about organisational transformation. Secondly, this research by Keyes, Hanley-Maxwell and Capper (1999) drew my attention to the benefits of a longitudinal approach of gathering qualitative data over an extended period of time and from other stakeholders in the educational organisation.

Furthermore, this research by Keyes, Hanley-Maxwell and Capper (1999) and the Caribbean study by Conrad, Brown and Crockett (2006), did not commence by focusing on spiritual dimensions of leadership. Spirituality was revealed in the process of learning about educational leaders' life-stories and a principal's empowering leadership behaviours. The focus of the study by Keyes, Hanley-Maxwell and Capper (1999) was special education and empowering principal practices, not spirituality per se. Spirituality was described by the principal, but not an intended topic for inquiry in the research design. Although Hanley-Maxwell and Capper (1999) included teachers in their study, teachers were not focused on spirituality in their principal's leadership. It is also unclear from the

report how the teacher participants perceived the principal's spirituality and what contribution spirituality played in influencing their teaching.

The sixth example of research relates to a different study in the United Kingdom by Flintham (2003), an experienced secondary school head-teacher, consultant, and research associate of the National College for School Leadership. This study had six aims, three of which are particularly relevant to my research.

*To describe the perceived individual spiritual and moral bases of headship across a range of headteachers: To codify identified strategies for individual head-teacher sustainability and replenishment: To consider examples of how spiritual and moral leadership is displayed by reflection on critical incidents within leadership stories (p. 4).*

This research was a qualitative inquiry involving a cross-sectional sample of twenty five serving headteachers from a wide variety of primary and secondary schools from within the geographical region of Devon to Durham, Lancashire to London. The sample included fourteen male and eleven female headteachers who had a wide range of experience. The participants worked in eight church schools, thirteen secular schools and four described as 'high ethnic.' The schools varied in student roll size from 60 to 1600 and were situated in a variety of contexts including poor inner urban areas, and more affluent suburban and rural areas. The research method focused on a single, semi-structured and open ended, hour long, face to face interview with each of the headteachers. A key focus was to draw on participants' recollection of critical incidents and their reflection upon these to illustrate their responses to the questions (Flanagan, 1954). The data derived from each headteacher was therefore personalised and not triangulated by any other data gathering instruments or other personnel from within their respective schools.

Flintham draws a useful but debatable distinction between spiritual and moral management and spiritual and moral leadership. He says, within in the English educational context, that spiritual and moral management might include religious education and citizenship in the curriculum. Whereas spiritual and moral leadership he believes is, 'concerned with the often intangible aspects of interpersonal engagement and quality of relationships' (p. 3) He also explains that this spiritual and moral leadership can be particularly tested by external pressures and yet, 'is

preserved by a clearly articulated structure of moral and ethical values' (p. 3). He sums up this difference between leadership and management as 'the difference between being and doing' (p. 3), which I believe oversimplifies and dichotomizes what are essentially, two highly integrated aspects of educational leadership. Flintham's post-structural conceptualization of spiritual and moral leadership is clearly articulated when he says,

*[It] does not have exclusively religious connotations or linkage to a specific set of beliefs. It is based on a wider concept of 'secular spirituality': whatever it is that gives the individual their foundations of ethical behaviour and bases of belief (p. 3).*

The main findings of this study showed the presence of diverse 'faith perspectives and belief systems' (p. 6), which reflected the pluralistic English society and cross sectional research design. It also affirmed his pre-supposition that 'spirituality is accepted as a common human phenomenon which includes but is not defined by organised religion' (p. 8). He also believed the findings justified the use of 'secular spirituality' underpinning the research. The headteachers' value systems guiding their moral and spiritual leadership were divided into categories including egalitarian, vocational, and Christian perspectives, with some of the participants identifying with more than one of these. The egalitarian value system was described as 'a belief in the essential goodness of humanity' and was identified by just under a quarter of the participants. Over 60% of the headteachers cited 'a Christian value framework as influencing their professional practice' (p. 9) more than twice as many as the number of church schools in the study. One head-teacher in a non-church school was reported as saying, 'I will share my personal faith but not evangelise. I believe in parity of esteem for all faiths; this is the safe place for spirituality' (p. 9).

Another aim of this research was to inquiry into how these headteachers engaged in replenishing and sustaining their moral and spiritual leadership. Ten participants discussed how they drew upon their own core beliefs, six headteachers (not all from church schools) explained how their reservoir was sustained by 'an active Christian faith'. This number was less than half of those who had previously cited a Christian value framework as underpinning their leadership. Participants also cited a wide range of networks that contributed to their overall resilience. In terms of critical

incidents where their reservoirs for moral and spiritual leadership were perceived to be drawn upon, the results were grouped around three categories namely, community tragedies, personnel problems and organisational crises.

There are several key issues from this study that are instructive for my own research. Firstly, this study, unlike the previous two, was intentionally focussed on moral and spiritual leadership. Secondly, it had a secular, post-structural conceptualization of spirituality reflecting the educational system and socio-cultural context of the participants which was explicitly explained to participants at the beginning of the interviews. Thirdly, the scope of the research included a diverse range of participants to obtain a broad and more generalizable descriptive understanding of moral and spiritual leadership. Fourthly, the interview schedule included a focus on critical incidents as a way of capturing the specific lived experiences wherein spiritual and moral leadership was perceived to be experienced. Of concern were the absence of an extended period of time with each participant, a lack of triangulation in participants' data, and the absence of teachers' voice, to understand how spiritual and moral leadership was received by others in the headteachers' school organisations. I was also curious about the finding that headteachers' reservoirs of hope were only drawn upon in times of tragedy, problems and crises. I wondered if spiritual and moral leadership might be drawn upon in other more positive contexts too.

The seventh example of research into spirituality in educational leadership used a hermeneutic phenomenological methodology. This recent study by Walker and McPhail (2009), from Morgan State University, Baltimore, explored 'community college president and chancellor perceptions of the phenomenon of spirituality and the role of spirituality in their leadership style' (p. 321). Fourteen participants with diverse cultural, gender, age, and experience demographics were selected from various geographic locations within the United States. Their selection was also based on their 'interest in the topic of spirituality' however this interest is not elaborated upon in the article.

The findings included religious and non-religious definitions of the phenomenon of spirituality. Most of the *religio-spirituality* perspectives, a term identified in their literature review (Moran & Curtis, 2004), were described as a 'belief in a

higher power, specifically God, for meaning-making, guidance, protection, decision-making, and a personal journey that leads to a core of central values' (p. 326). Some of the findings describe non-religious perspectives in which for example, one participant emphasized 'ethical behaviour' (p. 327). The findings also describe the ways in which participants expressed spiritual qualities in their work. These included their values and beliefs, community building, creativity and communication, and that centre of servant-leadership. All participants 'regardless of race or gender indicated that spirituality plays a role in the work of community college leaders' (Walker & McPhail, 2009, p. 331).

In terms of what that role meant and how spirituality influenced the leaders' respective organisational cultures, the findings report that the participants believed they 'symbolically shape organisational culture and spirit by influence through empowering others, ceremonies, acknowledging faculty and staff, and staff development and relationships with students. This research also describes spirituality in educational leadership as connected to participant's self-reflexive thinking, their sense of wholeness, their boundary setting and balance in life, and their focus on being authentic, resilient and remaining connected to others. It also highlighted that for many of these participants their spiritual practices included the 'prioritization of faith, beliefs and values' (p. 338).

This study was not available until near the end of my research. I find it valuable as an example of phenomenological inquiry, even though the hermeneutic aspect of phenomenology is not expounded upon. Unlike my research focus, this study by Walker and McPhail (2009) was contextualised in the public tertiary education sector of the United States. I felt concerned about the authors' conceptual framework being founded upon 'the Meanings Systems psychological approach, Tisdall's model of spirituality, Bolman and Deal's symbolic leadership frame, and Rendon's Academics of the heart model' (p. 323). I found their conceptual framework on spirituality confusing and unclear and in conflict with their espoused phenomenological methodology.

I found it interesting that the findings included the presence of spirituality in what the authors call, 'proudest accomplishments' and 'moments of disappointment' (p. 332). This extended upon Flintham's (2003) findings which

tended to focus only on spirituality as a source or reservoir of hope and strength within negative and difficult aspects of educational leadership. I was curious to note the way the article by Walker and McPhail (2009) referred to religio-spirituality which provided an inclusive recognition that spirituality, for some people, can have religious meanings connected to a higher power and specifically to God. I also noted in the findings the importance of critical reflection in assisting the leaders maintain authenticity and relational connectivity with others in their professional practice.

Another particularly relevant study on spirituality in educational leadership is the doctoral thesis by Ramirez (2009), conducted through Texas Tech University. Ramirez' own biographical description includes theistic spirituality perspectives and a professional background as a principal and current involvement at a national level managing educational programmes working with educational leaders and high risk students. Her qualitative, exploratory case study, focused on spirituality in the praxis of four elementary, public school principals from Texas, Northern Virginia and California. Prospective participants were identified through a nomination process in which her colleagues suggested the names of educational leaders who 'appeared to lead through spirituality' (p. 58). Selection was made to provide a range of demographics. The participants conceptualised their spirituality as socially constructed, separate from religious institutional frameworks and connected to diverse sources.

Integral to her research methodology was the testing of eight out of some forty two key concepts in Houston and Sokolow's (2006) theoretical framework, 'The Spiritual Dimension of Leadership.' The eight concepts emphasized leadership intention and attention, recognition of uniqueness of gifts, gratitude, uniqueness of life lessons, a holistic perspective, openness and trust. The research method included gathering data from three semi-structured one-to-one interviews, a focus group meeting and electronic and written journal documents. Two of the research questions were, 'What are the lived work experiences of principals that provide evidence of spirituality?' and 'How do principals perceive the meaning of spirituality in their work?'

The most critical finding was the need for and practice of openness. Connected with this practice were in-depth reflection, self-awareness and relationship building. Another key finding was that all four participants used what Ramirez calls, 'a spiritual filter as a basis of decision-making and as an informed framework for their leadership' (Ramirez, 2009, p. viii). This notion of a spiritual filter was described as going inward and being reflective, listening to an inner voice as participants ran situations through it, 'seeking guidance, direction, and peace, all the while adding the lessons learned to their cache of wisdom' (p. 111). Also of interest was the inclusion of negative effects of leading through spirituality which were described as 'misunderstanding and stereotyping, attacks on leadership style, increased vulnerability, isolation, and over-whelming self-imposed pressure.' (p. viii). The positive effects attributed to spirituality by participants' were that they derived strength, courage, wisdom, stability, and an increase in relational skills.

This study was also only available near the end of my research. It provided some useful comparisons with my research findings. Firstly it intentionally focused on the praxis of spirituality in the lives of four principals, three of whom were serving in elementary schools. Secondly Ramirez employed an exploratory case study method and triangulation of data gathering instruments, including reflective journaling. I found it interesting that the findings included negative effects for the principals from leading through spirituality, which seemed to be muted or absent in the previous studies reviewed.

The study was not a phenomenological inquiry but rather an opportunity to test part of a theoretical framework of spiritual dimensions. I wondered why only eight out of forty two concepts of Houston and Sokolow's (2006) framework were chosen and how this selectivity influenced her research findings. I was also curious about the participant selection process and the absence of a definition of spirituality which guided her colleagues' nomination of people who 'appeared' to them to lead through spirituality. Although her data was very in-depth for each of the principals, there was once again an absence of teacher voice which I believe limited the understanding of the *praxis* of spirituality in principal leadership.

The ninth and final piece of research into spirituality in educational leadership that I have included in this review is the work by a local educator Dixon (2002), for her Masters degree in Education through the University of Waikato in New Zealand. Her qualitative case study involved five principals with diverse demographics, who were working in public, state primary schools in the Waikato region. The focus of her inquiry was, whether these five principals had explicit philosophies of education and leadership, and whether spirituality was part of the principals' way of leading. If so, what impact did these issues have within their schools? Spirituality is understood in this study to be inclusive of diverse perspectives including cultural and transcendent views. She recognized the issue of power inherent in spirituality to either 'liberate or violate' (p. 37). That is, it could be both positive and negative as a contributing factor of leadership influence.

Her findings revealed that all five principals 'acknowledged an aspect of spirituality within their leadership' (p. 182) and several embraced theistic perspectives. Spirituality in principal leadership was described behaviourally in terms of relational connectivity, respect, care, equity, sensitivity to diversity, and making a conscious effort to 'speak and act on the outside in ways that were the same as the truth they knew on the inside' (p. 184). Importantly, according to Dixon, issues such as personal motivation, balance in life, workplace resilience, and having an attitude to serve and value each person were found to be identified by the principals to their spirituality or spiritual beliefs. Unfortunately, the scope of her thesis precluded gathering data from the staff at these five schools to 'obtain their perceptions of the impact of their principals' philosophies' (p. 189). There was also an absence of comment on possible contextual factors that might mediate the integration of spirituality into workplace practice.

This was a valuable study in that it linked closely to my proposed research. It acknowledged diverse meanings of spirituality; meanings that were socially constructed, and connected to cultural and religious epistemologies. Dixon affirms that behaviours attributed to spirituality *are* related to spirituality beliefs. She also identified the rich contribution teachers could make to understanding spirituality, especially in verifying the impact of the principals' spirituality in their schools.

### *Summary*

This section of the literature review has critically examined two quantitative, one mixed methods, and six qualitative studies from range of countries including New Zealand, Britain, the Caribbean and the United States. These studies have ranged from surveys of several hundred headteachers (Woods, 2007), a select group of 14 community college principals and chancellors (Walker & McPhail, 2009) to in-depth case study interviews of individual educational leaders (Conrad, Brown and Crockett, 2006; Dixon, 2002). Various methodological and theoretical positions have underpinned these examples of research with each study recognising that spirituality needs to embrace a broad inclusive ontology that reflects the pluralism in societies around the world. Some of the studies intentionally excluded religious perspectives of spirituality whereas others reported evidence that spirituality for many participants was intimately connected with their religious beliefs. Malone and Fry (2003) tested a causal model for organisational transformation, Wellman, Perkins and Wellman (2009) applied an inventory of spirituality, and Ramirez (2009) selected aspects of a framework developed for spiritual leadership.

Some of the studies encountered the spiritual dimensions of leadership indirectly (Keyes, Hanley-Maxwell and Capper, 1999) whereas others intentionally sought to understand spirituality and resilience in educational leadership (Flintham, 2003). All nine studies claim that spirituality made constructive contributions to the educational leaders' beliefs, attitudes, behaviours and resilience in their demanding roles. Only one study by Keyes, Hanley-Maxwell and Capper, (1999) included data derived from teachers and other stakeholders. However, this study did not focus on teachers' perceptions of the principal's spirituality. The focus of the inquiry was on empowering principal behaviours with spirituality emerging indirectly during the research process as an integral dimension of the principal's self-description. It is also noteworthy that several of the studies reviewed had only recently been published and were not available when I commenced my study in 2005.

### **The defining question**

### *Introduction*

Having critically examined the diverse meanings of spirituality in the literature I make a case for an undefined or open position towards the phenomenon of spirituality for my case study research. The undefined or open position is justified as appropriate for my methodology and my intention to learn about spirituality as perceived by participants.

### *Diverse definitions*

Based on the literature review I believe all definitions of spirituality are underpinned by philosophical, scientific, sociological, and in some cases theological perspectives and presuppositions. Based on these considerations I agree with Tisdell (2003, p. 28) who writes, 'Spirituality is an elusive topic. Different people define it in different ways, but all definitions somehow seem to be incomplete.' I believe that in a post-modern, pluralistic, multi-cultural globalised society, a concise and widely acceptable definition of human spirituality is not possible. However I believe the literature review has opened up my understanding as to the *meanings* attributed to the phenomenon, the reasons why these diverse meanings may be held, and the influences that may have shaped people's construction of meaning.

### *Justification*

Positioning my case study fieldwork within an undefined and open expectation to the ways in which the participants will perceive spirituality is justified as appropriate for my constructivist and phenomenological methodology which will be elaborated upon in the next chapter. Although I found Tisdell's (2003) assumptions about spirituality helpful, I wanted to approach the field work open to the perceptions of participants and not wanting their meanings to fit a pre-conceived theory of spirituality. Adopting an undefined approach allowed me the opportunity to inquire into, analyse and interpret participants' meanings with all of its complexity and paradox within their school contexts.

In doing so, I avoid trying to homogenize diverse perspectives into some artificial uniformity. Dent, Higgins, and Wharff (2005, p. 633) say in their extensive empirical analyses of workplace spirituality, 'The various definitions are sometimes separate, sometimes overlapping, sometimes contradictory and

sometimes quite expansive and personal.’ I concur with Roehlkepartain, (2007, p. 1) who suggests that it is better to avoid a definition that is ‘final or comprehensive, thus inviting continued dialogue and exploration.’

### **Limitations in the research literature**

This review has revealed three significant limitations or gaps in the research literature pertaining to spirituality in educational leadership. Firstly, despite a significant amount of literature on the subject of spirituality in the workplace and in leadership theory, spirituality remains largely under-researched in school leadership contexts both in New Zealand and internationally. This gap is significant given that spirituality has been identified in educational documents as being important to children’s wellbeing. It has also been shown to contribute to leadership practice and organisational cultures. Although extensive research has been conducted on effective principalship, and spirituality shares commonality with many of the characteristics identified in these studies, research specifically focused on the praxis of spirituality in primary school leaders remains few and far between.

Secondly, it seems there has been little in the way of research that includes teachers’ perceptions of spirituality in principal leadership. Most of the literature focuses on what headteachers or principals say they believe and do. There has been very little attention paid to corroborating principals’ perceptions or to inquiring into how teachers make sense of spirituality in principalship. Further research is needed to find out about the characteristics teachers attribute to spirituality, and under what conditions might these characteristics be perceived as influential. There are no known research studies that describe teachers’ perceptions of the effects of spirituality in principal leadership on their teaching, either positively or negatively.

Thirdly, while there are a number of qualitative studies that explore spirituality in educational leadership there is none known to examine the subject from a constructivist and phenomenological methodology focused on the lived experiences of both principal and teacher participants in their school workplace

contexts. This is important because the review identified a number of studies that have sought the test various definitions or theoretical frameworks of spirituality. I believe that a constructivist approach is significant in that it allows for the participants to articulate their own perspectives and for their perceptions to be valued, as they make sense of the phenomenon

There were several other gaps identified in the literature. These pertain to a paucity of research into Maori spirituality in primary school leadership, the lack of women's perspectives of spirituality in principal-ship and the total absence of any research into spirituality in school leadership within integrated special character schools. There is also a noticeable absence in the literature on any research focused on negative influences of spirituality in educational leadership. Virtually all the studies list attributes and characteristics that are portrayed as positive. I wondered therefore whether a phenomenological study could be conducted that included diverse spiritualities from several principals, teachers, and school contexts.

The limitations discussed in this section helped me narrow the focus and scope of my research questions and to clarify the most appropriate research design to support my inquiry into those questions. By addressing some of these under-explored areas I believe the research will make a constructive contribution to what is still an emerging field within educational leadership literature.

## **Summary**

This chapter has reviewed literature pertaining to spirituality in principal leadership and its influence on teachers and teaching. The chapter has been structured around seven inter-related themes namely: Critically exploring the meaning of the phenomenon of spirituality, socio-political history of spirituality in public education in New Zealand; spirituality within the workplace generally, Comparing and contrasting spirituality in leadership with other leadership styles; research into spirituality within educational leadership; the defining question; limitations in the research literature.

These themes have highlighted a number of important issues. Firstly, the meaning of spirituality is able to be conceptualised in a variety of ways, both generally in the workplace and specifically within educational leadership. The answers to metaphysical, epistemological and axiological questions directly impact on one's ontological framework for making sense of the subject.

Secondly, the social landscape of New Zealand society has become increasingly diverse and people's perspectives on spirituality reflect that change. Notwithstanding, spirituality has had an enduring history in New Zealand's public education system especially around the teaching of a range of widely held values to guide behaviour and thinking. Religio-spirituality has been permitted through the optional Bible in Schools programme and several curriculum documents have endorsed Maori concepts of spirituality within the terms *haurora* and *taha wairua*. Teachers have also been made aware of the need to promote among other things, children's spiritual wellbeing.

Thirdly, spirituality has become a popular theme in workplace literature. It has been perceived to have utility by contributing towards improvements in people's morale and motivation, organisational culture and productivity. In terms of leadership theory, spirituality shares common characteristics with other styles such as faith, moral, relational and transformational leadership. Influence attributed to spirituality is predicted to come more from the personal qualities of leadership than from the position of power over followers.

The relatively recent and emerging research into spirituality in educational leadership shows a variety of methodological approaches and findings. Collectively the research affirms that spirituality can have meaning and relevance within the context of educational leadership. Spirituality is shown to contribute to their beliefs and attitudes about education, inter-personal relationships, and resilience. Nevertheless, reducing spirituality discourse down to a singular and inclusive definition is particularly challenging given the breadth of meanings ascribed to it. In the case of my qualitative research I have argued that an undefined or open position is appropriate for my methodology and for the particular inquiry questions being pursued.

The literature review did not affirm that spirituality in leadership would be a panacea for leadership problems, nor did it show that spirituality was necessary for effective leadership. What it did indicate was that spirituality in leadership may provide ‘another’ source for understanding and ability to work through dilemmas in relational, moral, and authentic ways. That is, spirituality may complement leaders’ professional experience and skills, but not be a substitute for them.

A number of gaps in the literature have been identified. These include the need for research into what spirituality means to New Zealand state primary school principals, and how it connects with their leadership praxis. There was also very little in the research literature that included the voice of those being influenced by spirituality in leadership, namely the teachers. There was similarly a gap in terms of how spirituality might contribute to teaching practice. I also noticed an absence of constructivist and phenomenological studies in which the lived experiences and perceptions of participants regarding spirituality are valued independently of imposed theoretical frameworks.

My research is significant because it addresses a relatively new and under-researched dimension of school leadership. This emerging field within scholarly literature suggests that spirituality can make a difference to people and organisations. Secondly it is significant because spirituality has had an enduring presence within public education documents and debate, being widely recognised as important to children’s wellbeing. It is therefore relevant and meaningful to teaching and those who provide leadership within teaching environments. Lastly, my research is significant in that its methodology, research design and inquiry questions address a number of limitations identified in the literature through the review process. To end this chapter, I quote from Fraser (2005) who in reference to researching spirituality in the New Zealand says,

*These are exciting times in secular education. Acknowledging spirituality is a huge step towards extending what it means to be human. It also reveals a dimension that has existed over time, but has been neglected and avoided in secular Western education (p. 64).*

## CHAPTER THREE: THE RESEARCH PROCESS

*If we emphasise only scientific and technological knowledge, or only literacy and numeracy, we could languish in other areas, including physically, aesthetically, morally and spiritually. (Mulford, 2009, p. 24)*

### Introduction

The above quote by the Australian educational researcher, Professor Bill Mulford, highlights the need for a holistic balance in our pursuit of knowledge, and that the spiritual area of knowledge is important. This viewpoint resonates with the purpose of my thesis which is to understand what spirituality in principal leadership and its influence on teachers and teaching might mean in public primary school contexts. My study is structured around four key questions.

- What might the phenomenon of spirituality mean to participants?
- What might spirituality in principal-leadership mean to participants?
- By what means might spirituality in principal leadership be perceived to be influential?
- What influence might spirituality in principal leadership have on teachers and their teaching?

I decided to explore the lived experience of spirituality in school leadership from both principal and teacher perspectives and from an undefined position on the term spirituality. By investigating these under-explored aspects of spirituality, I hope to make a significant contribution to this emerging field in educational research literature. My study will be of interest to those engaged in educational leadership, both in New Zealand and internationally. It will be particularly relevant to experienced and beginning principals, middle managers, aspiring senior leaders and teachers both within public and private schools, especially if they have an interest in this dimension to leadership and the contribution it might make.

In this third chapter I discuss my research process. The chapter is organised into four sections. The first section explains the qualitative, interpretive,

constructivist paradigm and applied phenomenological perspectives underpinning my research methodology. The second section discusses the research design which includes describing the singular, multiple-site, descriptive case study strategy, involving three primary schools. The section discusses the participant sample and recruitment process, along with ethical considerations for working relationally and confidentially with the principals and teachers. I also discuss the procedures for collection and analysis of the qualitative data. These include semi-structured interviews, overt non-participant observations, and principal reflective journals. The chapter concludes with examining of a range of evaluative criteria to assure the trustworthiness of the research process and outcomes.

## **Methodology**

### *Methodological challenges with inquiry into spirituality.*

Methodology is simply defined as ‘how do we know the world, or gain knowledge of it’ (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000, p. 19). Methodology is focused on the philosophical assumptions behind *why* I’m doing my research in a certain way. Developing a robust methodology to inquire into the phenomenon of human spirituality in public educational contexts is challenging given its complexity and the diverse subjective perspectives through which people make sense of the topic (Coleson & Pearcey, 1999). Academically it is interesting because it ignites debate over epistemology, ontology, and metaphysics (Anderson, 1995; Battern, 2003; Eaude, 2005; Hertzberg, 2000; Rice, 2005; Van Reken, 1996), in seeking a conceptualisation that is acceptable to a pluralistic and secular society (Glazer, 1999; Van Dusen, 2005). Which perspectives will be included and which will be excluded in methodological considerations (McKay, 2004; Waaijman, 2002)? Is spirituality to be thought of entirely as a social-cultural construction? How might diverse rationalist, empiricist, existentialist, theist and humanist perspectives influence methodological considerations? How might these diverse interpretations of reality and spirituality be included in social science research? These are some of the questions I have wrestled with.

A decade ago critics of this newly emerging field within educational leadership literature commented that discourse on spirituality was largely ungrounded or lacking a sound theoretical base (Saas, 2000). However in the past ten years a small but growing body of research, as highlighted in the literature review, has attempted to address this criticism (Fry, 2005). It is not surprising that a phenomenon difficult to define is going to be difficult to measure (Benefiel, 2005). To measure or describe spirituality that has innumerable perspectives, secular and sacred, which are deeply embedded within people's beliefs, social, cultural and religious traditions, values and experiences is methodologically challenging.

Spirituality in leadership has been studied empirically, both quantitatively and qualitatively, through observation and experience of personal attributes and actions (Giacolone & Jurkiewicz, 2003). My empirical study seeks to understand the meaning people ascribe to spirituality including their beliefs, feelings and thoughts that shape personal attributes and actions. It also inquires into the perceived influence of spirituality between principal and teacher participants within their school contexts. Bearing these considerations in mind and that according to Neuman (2003, p. 90) there is, 'no single, absolutely correct approach to social science research,' I decided on a qualitative 'interpretive, constructivist philosophical framework or *paradigm* (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p. 22).

#### *Qualitative research*

Qualitative research is a complex field of inquiry that has developed and continues to develop through various overlapping historical moments or periods (such as modernism and postmodernism) in the past 100 years (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). The seventh and current historical 'moment' described by Denzin and Lincoln (2000, p. 3) is concerned 'with moral discourse, with the development of sacred textualities.' This latest moment in the development of qualitative inquiry is particularly relevant to my research. Denzin and Lincoln (2000, p. 11) say that throughout the history of qualitative research, 'investigators have always defined their work in terms of hopes and values, religious faiths, occupational and professional ideologies.' In recognizing the importance of axiological considerations in social science research, Lincoln and

Guba (2000, p 169) say, 'defining religion broadly to encompass spirituality would move constructivists closer to participative inquirers.' Within axiological philosophical considerations (the study of values and value judgments) Lincoln and Guba (2000, p. 169), argue that 'sacred science and human functioning find legitimacy;' and it can be a place where, 'sacred spaces become authoritative sites for human inquiry or the place where the spiritual meets social inquiry.'

Qualitative research is difficult to succinctly define. It is described in literature as 'a set of interpretive activities,' and that it, 'privileges no single methodological practice over another' (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 6). It means slightly different things depending on the paradigm and research design to which it is applied. Generally speaking, 'qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or to interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them' (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 3).

Qualitative research is also understood as a term for an anti-positivist movement prominent in the early 1970s which encompassed 'multiple epistemological, political, and ethical criticisms of social *scientific* research' (Schwandt, 2000, p.189). Qualitative research is commonly recognised as one of two dominant and contrasting (although some would argue complementary) philosophical approaches to social inquiry, the other being quantitative, which follows a positivist scientific paradigm (Neuman, 2003). Mixed methods, a combination of both, is also gaining popularity (Creswell, 2003).

Philosophically, qualitative researchers hold a number of ontological and epistemological pre-suppositions (Savantakos, 2005). For example they view reality as being inseparable from people's lives, that objective reality does not exist separate from experience but is interpreted through a person's lived experience or life-world (Husserl, 1965). The qualitative researcher recognises the 'socially constructed nature of reality, the relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry' (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 8). Qualitative research is a more descriptive, informal and inductive literary style (Bryman, 2004). Unlike positivist claims of objectivism, qualitative researchers believe, 'reality can never be fully apprehended, only approximated' (Guba, 1990, p. 22).

Quantitative research emphasizes the experimental collating of numerical or quantifiable data and the statistical analysis of this data for features such as frequency, causal relationships and validity. In contrast, Creswell (2003, p. 179) says, 'qualitative inquiry employs different knowledge claims, strategies of inquiry and methods of data collection and analysis.' Qualitative research seeks a rich, in-depth understanding of what are often complex phenomena, usually in the form of textual data.

Some qualitative researchers are critical of the natural sciences positivist model of research being applied to the social world (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). This is argued epistemologically that qualitative research is not trying to explain what is true, but trying to understand what is believed to be true about human behaviour. Bryman (2004, p. 540) says the qualitative researcher seeks to, 'grasp the subjective meaning of social action' cautiously, recognizing there are many lenses, multiple voices and complex overlays of social-cultural, personal and situational factors through which interpretations may be biased and distorted. Laverly (2003, p. 2) in criticising positivism that relies solely on external, physical stimuli that can be isolated and measured says it, 'not only misses important variables but ignores context and creates a highly artificial situation'

#### *Interpretive constructivist paradigm*

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2000, p. 22), 'all research is interpretive' irrespective of whether it is qualitative or quantitative. They identify and describe six qualitative paradigms. The one I've chosen as appropriate to my research is interpretive constructivism. Denzin & Lincoln (2000, p. 158) say, 'constructivism adopts a relativist ontology (relativism), a transactional epistemology, and a hermeneutic, dialectical methodology' for gathering, analysing and reporting the data. Qualitative research is interpretive in that people's beliefs, ideas and the meanings they bring to describe phenomena are all subject to interpretation. Interpretive philosophy is constructivist when it recognises that meaning is a co-creation, being interpreted by those being researched, the researcher, and by the reader of any subsequent report (Cohen,

Manion & Morrison, 2000). In discussing various interpretive philosophies Schwandt (2000, p. 193) says that they all share the following common features.

*They view human action as meaningful, they evince an ethical commitment in the form of respect for and fidelity to the life world, and from an epistemological point of view they share the neo-Kantian desire to emphasize the contribution of human subjectivity to knowledge.*

#### *Phenomenological perspectives*

Phenomenology can be applied to philosophical considerations of methodology and as a strategy for engaging in research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). I have chosen to apply several philosophical perspectives of phenomenology to my methodology because they fit strongly with my intention to inquire into the lived experience of the phenomenon of spirituality in school contexts. van Manen (2002a) describes six orientations towards phenomenology and lists some of the scholars who are associated with each one. These are, transcendental (Husserl), existential (Heidegger, Sartre), hermeneutical (Heidegger, Gadamer, Ricoeur), linguistic (Blanchot), ethical (Scheler, Levinas) and phenomenology of practice (Van Manen). In discussing phenomenology, van Manen (2000a, p.1) says, the French philosopher Paul Ricoeur (1913-2005) believed that, 'Meanings are not given directly to us, and that we must therefore make a hermeneutic detour through the symbolic apparatus of the culture.' This hermeneutic approach to phenomenology seeks to understand, 'how human meanings are deposited and mediated through myth, religion, art, and language' (ibid., p. 1).

The word phenomena, is derived from a Greek word meaning *appearance*. Theoretical considerations of what constituted phenomena (e.g. sensory data, rational ideas or a combination of both) can be found in literature going back to the eighteenth century (Smith, 2008). However, as a philosophical movement, phenomenology as we know it today began just before the turn of the twentieth century. Waaijman (2002, p. 536) says,

*Phenomenology sprang from radical doubt about the scientific starting points of the nineteenth century (rationalism, causality thinking, deductive reasoning and the like). The credo of phenomenology is: back to concreteness, the thing itself as it presents itself.*

In reference to the substantial work of the Jewish, German philosopher Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), credited as the founder of phenomenology, Waaijman (2002, p. 536) says, 'Phenomenology brings experience to the fore, analyses it, looks at it from various sides, tries to make its basic structure explicit.' Phenomenology as an 'interpretive-constructivist paradigm' (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003, p. 139), is concerned with the question of 'how individuals make sense of the world around them,' (Bryman, 2001, p.13) or their life-world (van Manen, 1997). Smith (2008, ¶ 7) adds the following description,

*Phenomenology studies the structure of various types of experience ranging from perception, thought, memory, imagination, emotion, desire, and volition to bodily awareness, embodied action, and social activity, including linguistic activity.*

Hermeneutical phenomenology is linked in literature to the German philosopher, Martin Heidegger (1889- 1976), who was an early student of Husserl. Heidegger developed his own distinctive philosophical position towards phenomenology, around the nature of 'being' (Dasein) and consciousness (Vessey, 2008). The concept of Dasein is complex. In describing this philosophical construct Giles (2008, p. 61), says Heidegger believed, 'that the person and the world are co-constituted, inseparable, and an integrated unity... As such, humans make sense of their world from within their existence, their being-in-the-world.'

One of the more comprehensible differences between Husserl's and Heidegger's philosophical approaches to phenomenology relates to the issue of whether or not the researcher can truly be objective. Husserl was influenced by positivism, and believed researchers ought to bracket their own preconceived ideas about phenomenon in order to better understand it through the 'voices of the informants' (Creswell 1998, p. 54). This requirement to become objective, was strongly criticised later by Heidegger and others.

Gadamer (1998), a former student of Heidegger, was 'emphatic in his stand that methods are not totally objective, separate or value free from the user. He viewed bracketing not only as impossible, but attempts to do so manifestly absurd' according to Lavery (2003, p. 5). In reference to Heidegger's

unbracketed approach Koch (1996), describes it as one of supporting prejudice, but in a positive way whereby the researcher remains transparent by documenting the influence of personal history and predispositions through a research journal. In this manner a researcher's values would not be considered a barrier to understanding phenomena. Laverly (2003, p. 8), elaborates on this by saying,

*The biases and assumptions of the researcher are not bracketed or set aside, but rather are embedded and essential to the interpretive process. The researcher is called, on an ongoing basis, to give considerable thought to their own experience and to explicitly claim the ways in which their position or experience relates to the issues being researched.*

#### *Reflexivity, language and social relationships*

This need for considerable thought, can be linked to reflexivity or becoming reflexive (Norsworthy, 2008), and is recognized as an important feature of phenomenological inquiry (Potter, 1996; Schwandt, 2000). Reflexivity as it applies to both the researcher personally and the research process is understood as a maturing, introspective, collegial, iterative, critical examination of embedded and contributing assumptions and pre-suppositions. It also involves critical reflection on one's beliefs, and the social-cultural and historical forces that might shape them, even though it leads to greater vulnerability and uncertainty. Cunliffe (2004) suggests reflexivity can be engaged by focusing on a range of existential, relational and ethical questions. Sandelowski and Barroso (2002, p. 222) say, 'reflexivity is a hallmark of excellent qualitative research and it entails the ability and willingness of researchers to acknowledge and take account of the many ways they themselves influence research findings.'

Also central to phenomenology is language and in particular the interpretation of language used to describe phenomena. Linguistic systems and competence with language help define human experience for better or for worse. van Manen (1997) says, 'The insight into the essence of a phenomenon involves a process of reflectively appropriating, of clarifying, and of making explicit the structure of meaning of the lived experience' (p. 77). Hermeneutic phenomenology, relates to this position that 'language is the universal medium in which understanding occurs' (Laverly, 2003, p. 4) and that interpretation of language is central to this

understanding. In discussing two views of phenomenology (transcendental phenomenology and hermeneutic phenomenology) van Manen (1997), suggests that phenomenological text is in fact both descriptive in the sense that it names something and interpretive in the sense that 'it mediates between interpreted meanings and the thing toward which the interpretation points' (ibid. p. 26). Fundamental to hermeneutics is that there are no value-free descriptions, 'no pristine interpretation exists, indeed no methodology, social or educational theory, or discursive form can claim a privileged position that enables the production of authoritative knowledge' (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000, p. 286). Only tentative interpretations are therefore possible.

Alongside the importance of language is the issue of social relationships in phenomenological studies. Social phenomenology as described by Schutz (1970) seeks understanding into how shared meanings, social contexts, and social interaction shape meaning-making. Schutz believed people build a stock of knowledge which helps them to objectify and typify their experience of the world. Through building relationships people are able to form more comprehensive and shared understandings of each other's experiences. Conversely, poorly developed relationships lead to less accurate and more divergent understandings of each other's actions and experiences in life (Gubrium & Holstein, 2000).

#### *Applied phenomenological perspectives*

Van Manen (2002b) distinguishes between phenomenological research conducted by philosophers and phenomenological research conducted by professional practitioners. I see myself in the second category. My research methodology and method are not bound to a particular phenomenological approach but I apply some of the general principles of phenomenology. Specifically I have chosen the more realistic, unbracketed and reflexive stance attributed to Heidegger and Gadamer. I have applied the principles of inquiry from participants' perspectives, their lived, inter-subjective, situational, social-cultural experience of the phenomenon of spirituality within their school contexts (Waijman, 2002). I have also included the important hermeneutical perspective that meanings are deposited and mediated through myth, religion, art, and language, and in particular the importance of language in interpreting

and mediating between people's experiences and perceptions of phenomena. I also found Giles' (2008, p.61) explanation helpful in which he says phenomenology is an endeavour of, 'letting something be seen from itself', to 'establish a renewed contact with original experience, *prior* to theorizing about it, and to bring to light the meanings *woven into the fabric* of the experience because this enables understanding of human life.' In support of my methodological position van Manen (2000a) says in his discussion on the different orientations of phenomenology,

*For human science scholars, who are primarily interested in applying phenomenological method to their professional practice or aspects to their life-world, it is quite appropriate to take an eclectic approach to the tradition of phenomenology (p. 1).*

### *Summary*

My chosen methodology follows a qualitative, interpretive, and constructivist paradigm and applies several phenomenological perspectives. It is a methodology appropriate to the undefined stance I have taken toward spirituality, and the descriptive questions which have been developed. It also fits well with my intentions to research the lived experience of spirituality in principal leadership and its influence on teachers and teaching and within primary school contexts.

## **Research design**

### *Introduction*

The goal of finding 'plausible and credible outcome explanations, is central to all research' (Marsh et al., 2002, p. 3). Research design is critical to achieving these outcomes. In this section I discuss my chosen research design which consists of exploratory field work, contextualized around a singular multiple-site, descriptive case study strategy involving three public primary schools. My research *method* within my research design discusses three instruments or processes for gathering qualitative textural data, and a cyclical, reflexive, and inductive model of analysis. I also explain the way in which I have triangulated the research. I also provide an explanation of the research sample, how my

participants were recruited along with a timeline explaining when the data was gathered. The chapter concludes by critically discussing a range of procedures for evaluating the trustworthiness of the research process.

### *Participants*

I decided to recruit a small but purposeful sample (Bryman, 2001), of three primary school principals. This sample size was appropriate and manageable for my case study inquiry and would help enrich the findings. The recruitment process began with a data base being obtained through a Ministry of Education of New Zealand website for all the schools in the Bay of Plenty, Waikato and Auckland regions of the North Island. High schools, Intermediate schools (Year 7-8), kura kaupapa Maori schools, private and integrated religious schools were then deleted. High schools, because they were obviously outside the scope of this primary sector research and kura kaupapa Maori schools (State schools where teaching is in the Māori language and the school's aims, purposes and objectives reflect the Maori cultural philosophy) because I was not competent in te reo Maori (Maori language). Intermediate, private and religious schools could have been included. They were eliminated for practical reasons in that the research needed to be manageable, and because I wanted to focus on the phenomenon of spirituality within public, secular, primary school contexts. I also eliminated small primary schools preferring schools with more than one hundred children on the roll. This elimination process resulted in a semi-random sample of thirty public primary schools from three regions of the North Island of New Zealand.

I sent out thirty letters of invitation to these school principals (refer to appendices 2, 3 and 4), of which I received fourteen responses, four of which expressed their consent to be involved. The first three were selected because they were returned within the two weeks specified. Selection was in the final analysis at the researcher's discretion, based on the intention to have a variety of people represented in the project in terms of professional experience, gender and spirituality perspectives. The fourth acceptance letter was kept as a back-up, in case any of the first three principals had to withdraw, or their respective Boards of Trustees did not give consent for the research to proceed.

There was some homogeneity (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003) of the principal participants. Firstly, in terms of their professional position as primary school principals, each was experienced having been a principal at a previous school. They also shared similar New Zealand-European ethnicity. All three principals had grown up in New Zealand whose society and culture which is influenced by Christian religious perspectives. All three schools were co-educational public, secular, State funded, primary schools. One principal led a high, socio-economic rated Year 1 to Year 8 rural school, with a Maori bi-lingual unit attached. The other two principals led Year 1 to Year 6 schools in diverse suburban centres, one being within a mid socio-economic community and the other a low socio-economic community. Two of the principals identified themselves with Christian religious perspectives of spirituality and one principal emphasized a value-based spirituality perspective.

The second sample group in this research were three teachers within each of the three schools, nine in total, to help enrich and triangulate the data. However, before proceeding with this, permission was sought from each school's Board of Trustees to undertake the research (refer to appendix 3). Following the Boards of Trustees permission, the principals gave to all their teaching staff the letter of invitation for them to participate (see appendix 4). Three teachers volunteered from two schools and four teachers offered to be involved from the third school. In this latter scenario, I exercised my discretion and chose three teachers that represented a cross section of the levels from this school. As it turned out, a variety of social-cultural backgrounds, gender, experience and spirituality perspectives emerged within the three teacher participant groups. Recruitment was not subject to participants having a certain perspective on the phenomenon of spirituality. The only factor for selecting teachers was that they represent a cross section of each school. Overall my participant sample included seven female and one male teacher, and two male and one female principal. Details of participant demographics are included in the next chapter. I believe I conducted the recruitment process with professional integrity.

#### *Relationship to participants*

Qualitative research intentionally seeks understanding of complex human experiences in context. It is typically conducted in a semi-formal, relational, and

dialogical manner. Relational connectivity between the researcher and participant is in many cases essential to obtaining qualitative textual data. Laverly (2003, p. 8) says,

*The interaction in the interview takes place within the context of relationship that is central to what is ultimately created...the presence of a caring relationship is critical to this type of exploration.*

Only one of the nine teachers recruited for my research was known to me prior to conducting this research. I had met this teacher a few years earlier in my professional capacity as a lecturer visiting a student-teacher on practicum. I had met two of the three principals at their schools prior to this research on a couple of occasions, again through my role as a visiting tutor for student teachers on practicum. The third school I was not familiar with neither was I familiar with the principal as an educational leader. Knowing some of the participants beforehand helped with the initial building of a research relationship.

I also shared a common professional background with the participants and was able to relate to their school contexts and school life experiences. One of the three principals had participated in a small research project I was involved with two years earlier. I did share some common ground in terms of Christian religious culture with a few of the participants, however I was particularly careful to approach the subject of spirituality inclusively and openly, being focused on participant's perceptions of what spirituality in principal leadership meant to them. I maintained an ethical, respectful and responsible relationship with all participants throughout the research process.

#### *Ethical considerations*

Inherent in qualitative case study research is risk associated with the invasion of people's private and professional life-world by the researcher. Stake (2002, p. 447) says, 'qualitative researchers are guests in the private spaces of the world. Their manners should be good and their code of ethics strict.' Participants worked within close-knit school organisations and because I was inquiring into a dimension of principal leadership I needed to exercise discretion and care with their disclosure of information.

All participants were potentially vulnerable by joining my research even though they had given their informed consent. This was one of the reasons why the study focused on a descriptive case study and not an evaluative one. Each person was fully informed of their rights according to ethical regulations of the University of Waikato. Their rights and my ethical responsibilities of care and professionalism towards them, especially anonymity and confidentiality were outlined in the letters of invitation (refer to appendix 4). Anonymity was maintained by use of pseudonyms. Confidentiality was maintained by ensuring transcribed material was carefully managed and that no material was disclosed in such a way that would compromise the participants' identity or their professional relationships.

Two of the teachers did withdraw after the first round of interviews, one travelled overseas and the other was no longer available for personal reasons. All other participants continued through to the end of the research process. Contact with the principal and teacher participants was by phone and or email. I arranged dates, times and places to gather data by respectful negotiation, deferring to their needs and taking into account their heavy professional workloads and times constraints. In conducting my research no deception was intended or knowingly carried out.

#### *Data collection timeline*

I received approval from the University of Waikato ethics committee to conduct my research in May 2006. Thereafter I proceeded with the recruitment process. Once the twelve participants had been identified and consent received I commenced to arrange times for the interviews. Working full-time as a teacher educator and negotiating with busy teachers and principals was challenging.

Data gathering commenced in the fourth school term of 2006 and continued until the last term of 2007. I began with the interview schedules, seeking to complete one round of 12 sessions per term which was overly ambitious. Concurrent with these interviews I sent out the reflective journal pro forma to the principals. The overt non-participant observations were the last data gathering activities

conducted which afforded me opportunity in two instances of seeing participants in end of year assembly contexts.

### *Case study strategy*

A range of qualitative research strategies or traditions are discussed in the literature. Denzin and Lincoln (2000, p.20) list ten. According to Creswell (1998) there are at least five main *traditions* these being biography, grounded theory, ethnography, case study and phenomenology. How the interpretive process is understood is one area of difference between these qualitative traditions. Case study is described in literature as a context for social science research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000), and according to Stake (2000, p. 435), ‘not a methodological choice but a choice of *what* is to be studied by whatever methods we choose.’ Furthermore, case study is not limited to qualitative research. Stake, (2000, p. 449) says, ‘Many case studies are both qualitative and quantitative.’

Stenhouse (1981) traces the historical emergence of case study research in education back to the curriculum evaluation studies of the 1960s. He broadly categorizes case study research into three camps, purely descriptive case studies, evaluative case studies involving some degree of judgment and critical analysis, and action research in which case study or studies inform the formative process of development and improvement in an institution. Yin (1993, p. xi) says, ‘Case study continues to be an essential form of social science inquiry.’ Literature describing case study methods usually emphasizes the practice of placing a researcher in the field to observe phenomena (Stake 1995).

As a research strategy, case study can be understood as, ‘An exploration of a bounded system over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information rich in context’ (Creswell, 1998, p. 61). Bell (1999, p.10) says, ‘case study is concerned principally with the interaction of factors and events.’ Case study is also ‘concerned with the complexity and particular nature of the case in question’ (Bryman, 2001, p.47). Typical contexts for case study inquiry are a community or an organization. It is also common for case studies to include a longitudinal element in order to derive a deep and comprehensive understanding of the case context and workings. The choice of

case study was therefore appropriate for my intention to inquire into spirituality in principal leadership and its influence on teachers and teachers within their *schools*, which act as a bounded organisational system (Stake, 2000).

Of the various types of case study suitable for qualitative use I chose two, descriptive (Stenhouse, 1981) and revelatory (Bryman, 2001). I did not choose an evaluative or critical case study method (Meyers, 1997) because it would be unethical to place teachers in a position of passing judgment on the spirituality of their principal. Being asked to evaluate spirituality could be construed as being judgmental and place their professional relationships at risk. The choice of a descriptive case study method allowed me to obtain an in-depth dialogical description of the phenomenon of spirituality in principal leadership and its influence on teachers. The revelatory case study is similar to the descriptive method but with the added aim of seeking to reveal unknown insights into phenomenon within a particular organisational context (Bryman, 2001). I also wanted to triangulate the data and ensure a credible description of the phenomenon of spirituality in principal leadership was obtained. One of the ways I decided to achieve this was by designing a *singular* descriptive case study that included three school sites. This ensured the focus remained descriptive, and not on comparing one school leader against another (Stake, 2000).

### *Research methods*

Denzin and Lincoln (1994, p. 2) say, ‘qualitative researchers deploy a wide range of interconnected methods, hoping always to get a better fix on the subject matter at hand.’ I chose three qualitative procedures for obtaining textural data from the participants in my research. The primary method used was semi-structured interviews (Bouma, 2000). Overt non-participant observations and principal reflective journals were the other procedures used although these proved to be less effective than the interviews. Together these research methods enabled a me to obtain a rich set of data (Merriam, 1998). Focus groups for the teachers and principals were not ethically appropriate in this study as they would have compromised participant anonymity and potentially compromised their professional relationships. An anonymous staff survey was not chosen because I wanted to work relationally with participants over an extended period of time to

better understand phenomenologically, their lived experience of spirituality in principal leadership. Grudnoff (2007, p. 80) says,

*Because interpretive researchers are more concerned with achieving an empathetic understanding of how others see the world than testing the laws of human behaviour they employ data gathering methods that are sensitive to context.*

#### *Semi-structured interviews*

As a research instrument, interviews are effective ‘when investigators are interested in understanding the perceptions of participants or learning how participants come to attach certain meanings to phenomena or events’ (Berg 1998, p. 64). I chose three schedules of *semi-structured*, one-to-one interviews, consisting of between five to eight questions for both the principal and the teacher participants (refer to appendices 5 and 6). The semi-structured design fitted my research methodology, being flexible to respond to participants during the live interviews, even though the initial starter questions had been pre-determined. I considered this flexibility important, allowing me to probe and prompt for deeper understanding, to restate or clarify questions if they were not understood, and to summarise key points for verification during the interview process. This approach is supported by Eaude (2001, p. 224) who says, ‘If we are to understand what, and how teachers think about the spiritual ... we must probe more deeply into the underlying meanings they ascribe to language.’

The interview questions were exploratory in nature, participant centred, seeking understanding of spirituality inductively, as well as seeking examples of critical incidents of the phenomenon as they perceived it (Hodge 2005). For example, in schedule one of the teachers’ interviews, it asks, ‘How would you describe spirituality in your principal’s leadership? What makes you think that way?’ In schedule two it asks, ‘In reflecting on your time here as a teacher, how might the principal’s leadership influenced your character as a teacher?’ In the principals’ second interview schedule, one of the questions asks, ‘In what ways might spirituality be helpful in your role of providing leadership specifically to teachers? And again, ‘Why do you think your spirituality helps you?’

The interviews were mainly conducted on-site at the three schools, either in the principals' offices, teacher's classrooms after school, outside in the playground and in various office spaces. There were two exceptions where I conducted four interviews at two of the participants' homes at their request, because it was more convenient to them. The interview conversations were digitally recorded and transcribed by myself, apart from a few of the first interviews which were transcribed by an administrative assistant. I found transcribing an invaluable part of the research process affording me quality time to hear and reflect again upon the interview conversations. The first schedule of interview transcripts, were sent to participants for editing and approval. Thereafter they were offered to participants if they requested them. The interview schedule was spread across a four term period to allow sufficient time for this process of transcribing and editing, and to avoid being overly burdensome on the teachers and principals. This year long multi-phase design also facilitated double loop learning in which participants had opportunity to reflect on and provide a richer description of their understanding of spirituality in educational leadership (Argyris and Schon, 1996).

A number of potential challenges exist with interviewing participants in qualitative research. For example, there is inherent power in the interview questions and with the interviewer to subtly influence the type and content of responses elicited from participants. There is potential for bias or errors in the way a researcher might respond to a participant during an interview, placing undue emphasis on certain issues raised and ignoring equally significant ones. Questions also need to be unambiguous, open ended, appropriate to research intentions, ethically acceptable and able to be answered within the time frame agreed to (Creswell, 2003; Mathers, Fox and Hunn, 1998).

To offset researcher distortion during the interviews, I periodically attempted to summarise what participants were saying to provide opportunity for any oversight on my part to be identified. There were a number of ethical guidelines which helped address some of the other concerns. For example during interviews with participants, I emphasized they were free to interpret the word spirituality as they perceived it. Participants had the right to disclose what they were comfortable with. They were entitled to edit content from during their interviews

and later via their interview transcripts. The interviews were designed to be approximately 50-60 minutes in duration to avoid being too time consuming to participants. These time constraints helped reduce interview exhaustion and the risk of jeopardising the quality of the responses given (Yin, 1993). Overall 27 semi-structured interviews were planned, 23 were recorded, transcribed and analysed. The difference was due to one teacher travelling overseas and another withdrawing for personal reasons after phase-one of the data gathering process.

#### *Overt, non-participant observations*

I chose observations in my research because I valued the opportunity to catch a glimpse of what spirituality might look and sound like in the professional life-world of the principal participants. It was also hoped that it would enrich my data. The intention was to conduct three, approximately 1 hour duration, overt non-participant observations with each principal, one per term, spread over a three term period. Being an overt non-participant meant I was discreetly present, as neutral as possible, as an outsider looking in on the case context, without participating in the social phenomenon being observed. I was not able to experience first hand what the phenomenon of spirituality in principal leadership might mean as an insider in the case study, that is, as a teacher. Rather I had to feel what it might be like, mediated second-hand through the interpretation of my observations.

During the research process I conducted five observations. These included at least one observation of each of the three principals. The observational settings included senior and full staff meetings which a principal led, a senior school evening prize giving in which a principal played a key role, a bi-cultural end of year performance in which a principal spoke, and shadowing a principal through part of his morning's responsibilities. I wanted my presence to be visible for practical reasons. Covertly observing a principal would be technically problematic and it would be ethical problematic for the 'other' people whom the principal engaged with.

Observations have always played an important role in qualitative inquiry because they allow the researcher to gain another window into the social phenomena being researched, a deeper level of familiarity with the real life-

world of the participant, that is not obtainable from other instruments (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). I found my professional familiarity with primary school contexts helped me to feel comfortable in the range of settings in which the observations took place. This familiarity also enabled me to relate to the principals' and the educational language they used.

As the researcher I needed to take care to avoid inaccurate or selective observations which then lead to overgeneralisations, illogical reasoning and possible premature closure of the inquiry (Davidson and Tolich, 1999). It is possible that the overt presence of the researcher may influence the types of behaviour shown by the participant, thereby minimizing the manifestation of secret, deviant or less desirable actions and attitudes. One problem can be that 'during the observational process people assume situational identities that may not be socially or culturally normative' (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 634).

To minimize these potential problems, I entered the role of observer by informed consent, respectfully and reflectively, while at the same time getting 'acclimatised to the setting' as quickly as I could (Berg, 1998, p. 142). I agree with Denzin and Lincoln (2000, p. 634) who say,

*There is no pure, objective, detached observation; the effect of the observer's presence can never be erased.' Observations can also be influenced by socio-cultural and gendered identities, power structures and the unfolding relationship between researcher and participant.*

The observations had a number of limitations. It was not ethically possible to observe the principals in all their daily work experiences, especially when dealing with teachers with personal and confidential matters. I was also limited to a non-participant role and to small periods of time within a given work day. I believe the data obtained while helpful, was not as rich as that derived from the interviews where the deeper interpersonal perceptions of the influence of spirituality were able to be discussed. .

The observations did provide a number of examples of what *I* perceived spirituality to be and where *I* perceived it to be intentionally integrated in the principals' praxis, potentially contributing indirectly to the culture of their school and teachers. These perceptions were then able to be compared with the

perceptions obtained from the interviews of the teachers and the principals. Some examples of these observations are cited in the following two chapters of the findings.

The observational notes were recorded by hand on a simple pro forma I had developed. The notes were subsequently typed up and reflective comments inserted. Refer to appendix 13 for an example. Tape and video recordings of these observations may have helped to offset what Berg (1998, p. 146) calls 'erosion of memory' but were not ethically possible due to the likely inclusion of students and teachers in the footage from whom consent had not been obtained.

#### *Principals' reflective journal*

The third instrument in my research design was journaling (Corti, 1993; Stewart & Prebble, 1993). The intention was that each of the three principals would participate in a reflective journaling activity, three times during a school year. The journal pro forma, which I developed, was emailed to each of the principals and provided three general guidelines for them to respond to each day (refer to appendix 7). These guidelines included multi-level questions, aimed at guiding the principals through identification and description of spirituality, to higher order thinking of analysis, application, evaluation and reflection in action (Anderson and Krathwohl, 2001; Barth, 1990; Moon, 1999). In this way it was hoped the principal participants would be scaffolded sufficiently to critically reflect on spirituality in their leadership (Schon, 1987).

I was influenced toward using reflective journaling in my research design by the work of Neil et al. (2001) which focussed on principals' dual role functions as administrators and in providing leadership in teaching and learning. Their research method employed extensive use of on-line journal diaries. In justifying their decision to do so, they said there are three main advantages of diaries over other forms of data collection.

*Firstly they can provide a reliable alternative to the traditional interview method for events that are difficult to recall accurately or that are easily forgotten. Secondly diaries can help to overcome problems associated with collecting sensitive*

*information by personal interview. Finally they can be used to supplement interview data to provide a rich source of information on respondents' behaviour and experiences on a daily basis (Neil et al., 2001, p.42).*

Five reflective journals were completed by my participants including one from each of the three principals. The emailing of the journal pro forma made the sending and receiving of data easy. The journaling instrument was considered helpful by two of the principals as a tool to reflect on and process the events of the day. Two of the principals found it difficult to complete due to the time that it took at the end of busy day. The journaling instrument was helpful in providing another window into the phenomenon of spirituality, this time directly from the thought processing of each of the principals. However I did not find it as useful as I had anticipated.

#### *Pilot testing*

All principal interview schedules were pilot tested with a local primary school principal not otherwise associated with the research, to help eliminate ambiguity, increase clarity and ensure relevance (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000). Another benefit of pilot testing is described by Bryman (2001, p. 155) who says, 'Piloting the interview schedule can provide interviewers with some experience of using it and can infuse them with a greater sense of confidence.' I found the feedback from the principal was positive and affirming in that the questions were deemed to be inclusive, non-threatening and yet thought provoking. However, the exercise revealed there was too much repetition in the questions across the three schedules. Having reflected on this, several questions were edited and others re-written to explore the inquiry topic more deeply and from a wider variety of directions.

I also pilot tested the teacher interview schedules with an experienced teacher at a local school not related in any way to the research. This process raised concerns over how participants might struggle to distinguish influence attributable to spirituality *in* leadership as opposed to influence in leadership generally. As a result a revision was made of the teacher interview schedules to help address these concerns by including questions that specifically asked

participants to reflect on spirituality versus professional skills and whether the relationship between these could be distinguished.

### *Analysis of data*

Rigour and consistency are two important characteristics essential for qualitative data analysis, 'so that other researchers or readers, looking at the same messages, would obtain the same or comparable results' (Berg 1998, p. 224). These characteristics are also necessary so that emerging categories and understandings are not superficially or arbitrarily derived. There are also several tensions that exist with analysing qualitative data. Bryman (2001, p. 439), warns of 'quasi-quantification through the use of terms such as many, frequently, rarely, often, and some.' and in doing so compromising the rich situated meaning of phenomenon. However identifying the prevalence of phenomena or commonality of themes within textual data may be useful to offset anecdotalism. Bryman (2001, p. 439) describes anecdotalism as, 'the widespread use of brief sequences of conversations, or snippets from literature transcripts, and accounts of encounters between people' which may result in one off but exciting statements being afforded greater significance than they really deserve.

The method I used was based on Creswell's (1998, p. 143), 'data analysis spiral', a cyclical, inductive, and interpretive process. This method was consistent with my chosen constructivist paradigm and methodology, in which I was looking for meaning and significance, rather than frequency (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2000). This iterative, non-linear and recursive process began from the moment I commenced gathering my first data and extended through a six-step process of analysis spanning approximately two years.

During this time the data was transcribed, read, re-read, and reflected upon many times. Notes and comments were inserted into the Word document files (refer to appendices 10-13) as I *began* the time consuming and difficult challenge of classifying the descriptive material into contexts and categories, looking for relationship and differences (Meyers, 1997). I also often brought to mind the context in which the data was situated, the person who had provided the information and the meanings they attached to the language used. Bryman

(2001, p. 383) says in this way the analysis process becomes 'hermeneutic when it is sensitive to the context within which texts were produced'.

Berg (1998, p. 223) says qualitative data analysis may refer to, 'any technique for making inferences by systematically and objectively identifying special characteristics of messages'. While I disagree that this can or should be done objectively (Gadamer, 1998; Guba, 1990; Lavery, 2003; Schwandt, 2000), Berg describes at least seven major elements of written messages that can be the focus of qualitative analysis. These are, 'words or terms, themes, characters, paragraphs, items, concepts and semantics' (ibid. p. 224). The units of analysis which I have focused on in this research have been participant's words or terms, with a particular focus on semantics; the meaning ascribed to these words in their situated contexts. Importantly, analysis did not only look for commonality of views between participants but also any divergent perspectives.

Another technique which I found helpful was to visually and conceptually represent the data and emerging themes and relationships within more than one hundred Powerpoint slides (refer to appendices 14 and 15 for two examples). The Powerpoint software facility enabled me to progressively disclose ideas, showing how they connected with or intersected with one another. It enabled me to emphasize or minimize text depending on perceived significance, add colours, as well as arrows to indicate cause and effect or direction of influence. I found this software suited me better than working on the floor with lots of bits of paper and coloured marker pens. I also found it more effective than the qualitative data analysis software QSR N6 which was the only version available to me at the time. Although I trialled the use of N6 and the search facility was helpful in identifying frequency of words or phrases, it couldn't reveal the meaning or significance behind the language. Neither could it show the deeper contextual issues pertaining to the person who said the targeted words. It was never designed to be a substitute for the researcher or the interpretive process.

Analysis was not only a cognitive skill exercised by the researcher. It was also a shared three way process or social co-construction of meaning between my research participants, my University supervisors and myself (Gadamer, 1998). This occurred on various occasions during the research process and later during

the writing up of the findings. For example I would check what I perceived to be key ideas with participants in the second and third phases of the data gathering process. My supervisors would ask probing questions to help me articulate my emerging findings, question my wording and inquire whether some of the ideas could be collapsed or subsumed into other more significant categories. This reflective and critical dialogue contributed to the shaping and re-shaping of my understanding of the phenomenon of spirituality in principal leadership within my three school case study.

Overall this cyclical comprehensive and reductionist approach to analysis enabled what Creswell (1998, p. 140) refers to as, 'winnowing the data' in order to find the answers to my underlying inquiry questions. Lavery (2003, p. 10) says, 'the multiple stages of interpretation that allow patterns to emerge, the discussion of how interpretations arise from the data, and the interpretive process itself are seen as critical.' I also agree with Charmaz, (2005, p. 510) who says,

*No qualitative method rests purely on induction – the questions we ask of the empirical world frame what we know of it. In short we share in constructing what we define as data. Similarly, our conceptual categories arise through our interpretations of data rather than emanating from them or from our methodological practices. Thus, our theoretical analyses are interpretive renderings of a reality, not objective reporting of it.*

#### *Procedures for verifying qualitative research*

Validity, reliability, and generalisability are important considerations when ascertaining the quality of *quantitative* research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). The way these considerations are understood and applied to *qualitative* studies is less clear and an area of debate (Morse et al., 2002). For example there are a range of perspectives in the literature as to whether or not internal and external validity are appropriate criteria for qualitative research because they suggest measurement of variables and generalisability to statistical populations which fit a positivist paradigm (Bryman, 2001; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Mason (1994) suggests that qualitative validity could refer to whether you are observing and identifying what you said you would do. LeCompte and Goetz (1982) suggest external qualitative validity could be understood in terms of whether the study

could be replicated or not. However Bryman (2001), points out that replication is problematic because you cannot freeze context specific and socially complex relationships. Janesick (2000, p. 394) says ‘the value of case study is its uniqueness, consequently reliability in the traditional sense of replicability is pointless.’

Qualitative research is inherently challenging to evaluate because ‘qualitative researchers do not claim that there is only one way of interpreting an event. There is no one correct interpretation’ (Janesick, 2000, p. 393). How qualitative research satisfies the need for academic rigour and integrity will reflect the particular underlying methodology, paradigm, and research design. Alternative criteria or procedures more suited for evaluating qualitative research have been proposed focused around the terms trustworthiness, and authenticity (Bryman, 2001; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Trustworthiness is explained by Bryman (2001, p.272) within four sub-criteria, ‘credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.’ Although each criterion is listed separately they are interdependent upon each other. Ethical considerations are also integral to each criterion. These four sub-criteria related to trustworthiness are relevant to my interpretive constructionist paradigm and case study strategy underpinning my research process (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). According to Morse et al. (2002, p. 11) they are best understood as guideline procedures or ‘verification strategies’ which occur constructively (during the research process) *and* evaluatively (at the completion of the project).

### *Credibility*

Credibility relates to how believable are the findings (Bryman, 2001). There are a range of strategies that qualitative researchers can utilize to help strengthen the credibility of their research. Creswell (2003, p. 196) lists eight, triangulation, member-checking, rich thick descriptions, clarifying the bias the researcher brings to the study, presenting negative or discrepant information, spending prolonged time in the field, using peer debriefing and using an external auditor. I have incorporated the first seven into my research process.

Triangulation in case study research refers to a strategy and process of obtaining data from multiple viewpoints and from multiple contexts to provide a broader,

richer understanding of the complexities of social phenomena (Hitchcock & Hughs, 1995; Stake, 2000). Triangulation reduces discrepancies, distortions and bias which can result when data is obtained from only one perspective or in only one particular way (Davidson & Tolich, 1999). To reduce the risk of obtaining incomplete, unrepresentative data and making inaccurate interpretations I incorporated triangulation into my research in four ways. The first was through the three-school, case study strategy, the second was through the recruitment of three principals and three teachers within each school, the third was through the use of three research instruments to obtain data. The fourth was gathering the data over an extended period of time in three phases. This inclusion of a year-long dimension or a longitudinal aspect to my research is acknowledged to be another way qualitative research credibility can be attained (Creswell, 2003; Merriam (1998).

Member checking (Bryman 2001; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000) was another strategy I used during the data gathering phases of the research process. All participants were sent a copy of the transcript from the first round of interviews for editing. None of the interview transcripts were required to be changed. Several participants found it helpful to read what they had discussed. Subsequent transcripts were made available to participants if they required them, however all were very busy and indicated they were happy with what they had said, and consent was given to use the data as spoken. I also checked several of the emerging key themes with the participants. I also used a summarizing technique during interviews to check with participants if I was hearing and interpreting what they were saying accurately as far as they perceived it.

Peer reviewing took place regularly through monthly one hour meetings with my two research supervisors. I have also included several examples from the data whereby participants indicated some negative or discrepant influences arising from spirituality in principal leadership. In several sections of this thesis I have identified my own personal and professional experiences that I bring as researcher to bear on the research process.

I believe therefore the research process is credible in terms of its constructivist paradigm and phenomenological perspectives because the data obtained was

richly descriptive of their lived experience of spirituality in their school contexts. Participants were free to express their diverse perspectives on the subject, as they perceived spirituality, and not in terms of any theoretical construct or framework which I imposed upon them.

### *Dependability*

As an evaluative criterion in qualitative research, dependability refers to the integrity of the auditing conducted throughout the research journey (Bryman, 2001; Merriam, 1998). The auditing process for me began with the approval to conduct my research from the University of Waikato ethics committee in 2006 (refer to appendix 1), and will hopefully conclude with the completion of this thesis via the appointed examiners in 2010. Throughout the research process I have kept thorough and accessible records of my documents. These include recruitment letters to principals, school Boards of Trustees and teachers (refer to appendices 2, 3, and 4), research instrument pro forma (refer to appendices 5, 6, 7, and 8), and transcribed interviews, field observations, and copies of the reflective journals (refer to appendices 10, 11, 12, and 13 for examples of these). I also have electronic copies of the analyses carried out on these documents including the extensive Powerpoint work in which initial conceptual understandings of the emerging themes from the data were developed (refer to appendices 14 and 15 to see examples of this work).

Included in my 'audit trail' (Janesick, 2000, p. 393) are copies of the six-monthly progress review forms from the university along with a diary of the supervision meetings during the early stages of the research journey. Numerous copies of my thesis in progress bear testimony to the progressive way in which the academic writing style and scholarly understanding of the data has been refined and improved in consultation with my supervisors. In these ways I believe my research process and the findings are dependable.

### *Confirmability*

Philosophically, qualitative research acknowledges the unique contribution each researcher brings to social science inquiry (Gadamer, 1998; Guba, 1990). There are many ways whereby personal and professional attributes and skills, life experiences and pre-suppositions may shape the research journey and outcomes

(Bryman, 2001). This includes not only the researcher but participants and research supervisors as well. Denzin and Lincoln (2000, p. 21) say, 'the constructivist paradigm assumes a relativist ontology (there are multiple realities), a subjectivist epistemology (knower and respondent co-create understandings).' The main issue with confirmability is whether the researcher has allowed his or her values to intrude in the interpretive process to a high degree thereby significantly influencing or distorting the findings.

Krefting (1991) suggests a confirmability audit, triangulation and reflexivity as three ways to achieve confirmability. As discussed earlier, my research has been triangulated to minimize distortion and bias in the data *gathered*. I have also continually reflected upon my own personal and professional experiences and pre-suppositions to ensure as much as possible a place of neutrality. This can be evidenced by my open, invitational participant recruitment process, and the undefined or open stance regarding the definition of spirituality. It is also evident through the inclusion of phenomenological perspectives in my methodology, whereby the lived experiences of participants and not someone else's theoretical framework became the focus. I have also reported the limiting and ambivalent responses from participants regarding spirituality in principal leadership.

Reflexivity has also been an integral characteristic of my case study inquiry. Stake (2000, p. 445) says, qualitative case study is characterized by researchers spending extended time, on site, personally in contact with activities and operations of the case, reflecting, revising meanings of what is going on.' The evidence of critically reflecting on the research process and findings can be seen in the numerous drafts and re-drafts of my findings whereby interpretations have been re-examined against the data and the literature reviewed. A confirmability audit has also been achieved through the peer review process via my supervision meetings at the University of Waikato. This professional dialogue and critique of my emerging findings has contributed to the re-shaping of my conceptualization of spirituality and several interpretations of the findings regarding the meaning of spirituality in principalship. In these ways I believe I have acted in good faith throughout the research process (Bryman, 2001) and that the data can be confirmed as trustworthy.

### *Transferability*

Transferability in qualitative research refers to how readily the findings might be generalized by the reader as true or likely to occur when applied to other similar sample cohorts and contexts (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). External validity or generalizability to statistical populations is a common feature of quantitative research which is typically based on large, random samples. It is not a goal of qualitative studies (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) which tend to be thick, rich descriptions of small numbers of uniquely contextualized participants (Bryman, 2001).

The qualitative researcher seeks to present research that is trustworthy and accessible for readers to determine for themselves if the findings are applicable to other situations they have in mind. Cronbach (1975, p. 125) says, 'any generalization is a working hypothesis, not a conclusion.' Some readers of qualitative findings may seek to transfer aspects of the findings to their own or other people's theoretical propositions (Burns, 2000). Stake (2000, p. 442) adds that, 'generalization can be an unconscious process for both the researcher and the reader.' The transferability of my research is not for me to determine, however I have endeavoured to provide a 'thick description' (Bryman, 2001, p. 272) of the multiple-site case study so that readers will be able to determine if the findings are applicable in some way to other scenarios which they have in mind.

### *Authenticity*

Bryman (2001, p. 274) says authenticity as a criterion of evaluating qualitative inquiry raises a, 'wider set of issues concerning the political impact of research.' Authenticity can be considered in at least five ways according to Lincoln and Guba (1985). However the influence of authenticity is not widely acknowledged in literature, and is considered 'controversial' (Bryman, 2001, p. 275). I believe three aspects of authenticity apply to my research, fairness, ontological authenticity, and educative authenticity. Firstly, I believe the findings fairly represent different people in each of the three school sites, being inclusive of teaching staff from different curriculum levels, different levels of management responsibilities and experience.

Secondly my research findings provide ontological authenticity by including diverse non-theistic, theistic, socio-cultural and philosophical, individualistic and religious perceptions and experiences of spirituality. Thirdly, the research was perceived by both principal and teacher participants to be helpful in understanding the phenomenon of spirituality in educational leadership, and its contribution to teaching. This was affirmed in the final round of interviews where participants were asked how their participation had influenced them.

## **Summary**

In this chapter I have discussed my methodological framework underpinning my research. This framework includes a qualitative, interpretive, constructivist paradigm with applied phenomenological perspectives. My chosen research design includes exploratory field work based around a singular, descriptive case study strategy, involving three public, primary school contexts. Within the research design I have provided details of the small, semi-random, and purposeful sample of 12 participants and how they were selected. A number of ethical considerations for working relationally and confidentially with participants have also been discussed.

My research design is triangulated, and utilizes three methods for gathering qualitative textual data, semi-structured interviews being the main procedure, supported by overt non-participant observations and principal reflective journaling. A longitudinal aspect is referred to in which data would be gathered in three phases spread across a school year. A description of the cyclical, inductive, co-constructive and reflexive method of data analysis is followed by critical discussion of the procedures used to evaluate the trustworthiness of my qualitative research. I agree with the following quote by Lincoln & Guba (2000, p. 169, 185) who say,

*We stand at the threshold of a history marked by multivocality, contested meanings, paradigmatic controversies and new textual forms.' 'We may also be entering an age of greater spirituality within research efforts... sacred spaces become authoritative sites for human inquiry*

## **CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS (PART ONE)**

### **The meaning of spirituality in principal leadership**

*'The quality of who you are as a person... and quality of practice you put into life around others'* (BS, teacher Edward, 3:4).

#### **Introduction**

The above quote from a young male teacher participant involved in my case study, describes his perception of spirituality in principal leadership. He identifies two inter-connected dimensions; the quality of the person who leads and the quality of professional behaviour invested into the life of the school community. The following two chapters present the findings of my research which inquired into the meaning of spirituality in principal leadership and its influence on teachers and teaching within three public primary school contexts.

The methodology underpinning these findings was a qualitative, interpretive, constructivist paradigm with applied phenomenological perspectives. This research methodology acknowledges reality is subjective, that meanings are socially and culturally constructed. Understanding is gained through multiple lenses, and mediated through contexts and language. To minimize participant and researcher bias and to assure the trustworthiness of the findings, a triangulated research design was followed, and a cyclical, inductive, reflexive data analysis process applied.

Care has been taken not to evaluate one school or one principal against another. Ascertaining which principal's spirituality in leadership was the best was *not* within the scope of this research, and readers should bear this in mind when making any inferences from the findings. Following an overview of the participants' demographics, this chapter presents the findings of first two underlying questions relating to my research.

- What might the phenomenon of spirituality mean to participants?
- What might spirituality in principal-leadership mean to participants?

The findings pertaining to these two questions are presented under two themes, 'Making sense of life and making sense of living', and 'Woven threads and patterns of connections'.

### **Demographic overview of participants and their school contexts**

The data was obtained from three North Island state-funded, public primary schools.

- Site one (Green-tree School) is a suburban, middle socio-economic, co-educational, primary school with class year levels 1-6, and a roll of between 400-500 pupils.
- Site two (Blue-sea School) is a suburban, low socio-economic, co-educational primary school with class year levels 1-6, and a roll of between 300-400 pupils.
- Site three (Yellow-sun School) is a rural, mid-high socio-economic, co-educational primary school with class year levels 1-8, including a Maori full-immersion unit, with a combined roll of between 200-300 pupils.

All three school institutions have existed for over 25 years. Two of the principals have been established in their school institutions for more than five years. One of the principals was recently appointed (within the last 12 months) and was involved in a period of change when the research was conducted. This principal was in a transitional phase of building leadership influence within the school and its wider community. The principals include one woman and two men, all with experience of principal leadership at other schools prior to the school context being reported on in this research. Their understandings of spirituality include non-religious, secular and sacred perspectives.

Of the nine teacher participants, there were seven women and two men, comprising both Maori and European-New Zealand ethnicity. One teacher was working on a short term contract from the United Kingdom. Each teacher's

understanding of spirituality was a unique blend of a range of factors. For example, three of the teachers acknowledged Maori socio-cultural perspectives. Most of the teachers had some historical experience of religious perspectives of spirituality (various Christian churches) when growing up, with only two revealing they had current experiences. Two of the teachers described themselves as non-religious. While all the teachers were able to talk about spirituality, several found it awkward to do so through a secular professional lens, and because it was not a familiar subject. Several teachers found it awkward because of the diverse and complex meanings associated with the term. Overall, the teachers' understanding of spirituality included non-religious and religious, humanistic and supernatural world-view perspectives.

All the teachers had taught for at least three years. Six were full time class based teachers. Four were involved in middle or senior management and one, although not a registered teacher, was involved extensively in teaching children with severe behavioural and other needs across all levels of the school. During the data gathering process, two of the teacher participants became unavailable for phases two and three. One travelled overseas and the other was unable to continue for personal reasons.

All participant quotations cited in the findings are referenced with a code. Each school is abbreviated to GT (Green tree), BS (Blue sky) and YS (Yellow sun), the type of participant whether principal or teacher, and in the case of interview data, the interview number 1, 2 or 3 followed by the corresponding question number within that interview. In other words (GT, Principal, 2:4) means Green-tree school, principal interview two, question four. Below is a table summarising the general characteristics of the twelve participants and their respective school institutions. The characteristics are intentionally presented to minimize identification of the specific schools and the individual participants.

Table 1: Summary of the general characteristics of participants and their school contexts.

<b>Participants</b> Principals = P Teachers = T		<b>Characteristics</b>
<i>Ethnicity</i>	P	3 New Zealand-European.
	T	1 Maori, 2 Maori/NZ European, 1 English; 5 New Zealand-European.
<i>Gender</i>	P	2 male, 1 female.
	T	2 male, 7 female.
<i>Age range</i>	P	Approximately 45-55 years.
	T	2 approximately 25-30 years, 7 approximately 40-60 years.
<i>Professional experience</i>	P	All principals have had previous school principal leadership experience.
	T	2 with less than 5 years experience. 7 with more than 5 years experience. 4 teachers were involved in either middle or senior management roles.
<i>School types</i>	All institutions are co-educational, state funded primary schools. 1 is a full primary Year 0-8 school with a Maori bilingual unit. The other two schools cater for Year 0-6 children only.	
<i>School size</i>	Student rolls varied between 200 – 500 pupils.	
<i>School location and communities</i>	One school is located in a rural area and two are located in suburban communities. One of these schools is located in a large city centre and the other is located in a small town. The three communities' average family, socio-economic backgrounds varied widely. All three school communities were multi-cultural.	

## **Making sense of life and making sense of living**

### ***Introduction***

The theme 'Making sense of life and making sense of living,' highlights the findings of my first research question, 'What might the phenomenon of spirituality mean to participants?' 'Making sense of life' relates to cognitive and intuitive, internalized understandings of spirituality. These include non-religious and religious beliefs about the origin and purpose of life, interpersonal values,

transcendent awareness, professional motivation, and a passionate vision for working with children. 'Making sense of living' relates to the application of spirituality into daily behaviour. This included socially and morally responsible ways of engaging in professional practice, especially in terms of interpersonal relationships and quality care.

Participants made sense of spirituality in diverse and personalized ways, and yet shared many common views. Common views focused on qualities of interpersonal behaviour and the idea that spirituality was connected to existential questions about life and one's purpose. Participants' personalized ways of understanding spirituality were often conveyed with a sense of uncertainty or tentativeness, indicating that spirituality was private, complex and not confidently understood. Diverse professional, family, socio-cultural, and in some cases religious experiences, helped participants make sense of spirituality. Their understanding of spirituality was perceived as having developed over time, having been shaped and re-shaped through each person's life journey.

### ***Principals' perspectives of spirituality- making sense of life and making sense of living***

#### *Philosophical and religious frameworks*

Each principal's ontology or framework for describing spirituality was unique, being shaped and reshaped by their philosophical or religious beliefs, life experiences and socio-cultural contexts. For example one of the principals explained that human spirituality was 'a combination of various things in no particular order. May be they just all add to go with the whole.' (BS, principal, 1:1). This principal explained he didn't approach the subject from the idea of 'God' but from a practical relational, values-based philosophy built around his sense of the importance of life and the value of quality, interpersonal relationships.

*I suppose I have a philosophy that before we can get carried away with teaching science, technology and reading and writing, the children have got to develop in our values based school culture; they've got to know what we stand for and they've got to know that important relationship first and then the learning can occur... Part of this spirituality is tied up with just the value of*

*life. I love the life that I lead and I love New Zealand and I enjoy what I'm doing as a career. I value life and sadly in NZ there are people that don't value life in people's lives. So again, part of spirituality is the importance of life; your life and other people's lives (BS, principal, 1:1).*

The other two principals explained their understanding of spirituality around theistic ontologies informed by theistic epistemologies. That is, they held to a presupposition that their understanding of knowledge that is true and their ability to interpret reality was not limited to their own minds and self-experience. Metaphysically, these two principals, held a theistic view of ultimate reality rather than a materialistic view. When asked to give an understanding of why they thought that way one of them said

*I believe that people are made up of body, spirit and soul and one of the reasons for that is that I am a Christian. Even before I became a Christian, I was aware that people had spirituality (GT, principal 1:1).*

When probed further as to what was meant by 'spirit' this principal replied

*That there's a dimension to people that is more than what you can see. That dimension can be the way they act and everyday life can be affected by that spirituality...their personally held beliefs and culture (GT, principal, 1:1)*

The perspectives of spirituality expressed by the two principals were supported empirically by *a posteriori* arguments (that is perceptual evidence derived through experience) and *a priori arguments* (by intuitive, innate consciousness, and what was believed to be supernatural revelation in a sacred text.). One of them explained it this way.

*Well, I believe that we are made up of body, soul and spirit. And by soul, I guess I mean personality, emotions and character; and by spirit I mean more that part of us that carries on after we die, so that's our eternal self. And I think and believe that, from my understanding of the Bible and also from my experience of God's Spirit in my life (YS, principal, 1:1).*

*Social-constructivist considerations*

There was evidence of what Palincsar (1998, p. 345) refers to as ‘the interdependence of social and individual processes in the co-construction of knowledge.’ Each principal’s spirituality was understood to have been shaped through personal, family and in some cases religious institutional experiences, most of which had been situated within New Zealand’s society, a society traditionally influenced by Judeo-Christian, and British colonial world-views and values.

Spirituality was also explained developmentally over time, experientially through experiences, transcendentally beyond their normal range of experiences, and as a journey which is ‘in-progress’. Essentially each principal’s spirituality was shaped and reshaped by many factors. The following quotes are from each of the three principals in this study.

*I guess I’ll put it in the context of my upbringing. My close family and my wider family are all people who believe in God and go to church and are born again Christians. And so, right from when I was very little, I’ve always been taught that I’m a spiritual person; that we are all spiritual people and some people are more in touch with their spirituality than other people.*

*My spirituality is to do with recognising and listening and living each day in the context of Jesus as Lord, and that connects in with my values, my beliefs, the things I choose to do and not do, the things I want to do and don’t want. I guess that’s the journey I’ve been on all my life, because of the way I’ve been brought up... So it’s a spirituality that has developed as I’ve grown closer to, or developed in my understanding of, how I operate in a spiritual way (YS, principal, 1:1).*

*As a wild teenager I had no significant thought whatsoever. But you track back what the effect is, then perhaps it would influence what I have today. You know your experiences with friends, family, where you’d lived and where you’d traveled; you come to the decision after travel in life to appreciate that it’s pretty precious (BS, principal, 1:1).*

*I’d say there would be a lot of people...But the ones that come to mind would be my parents even though they were not Christian, I remember when I was growing up, we went to church especially at Christmas time... We went to an ‘EveryBoys’ Rally’ and there would have been an influence there, we may have had Bible in Schools but I can’t really remember that. When I was in my late*

*twenties, I studied kung fu and within that kung fu side was definitely a spirituality side (GT, principal, 1:1).*

#### *Good people and community values*

Each of the principals related their spirituality to quality relationships with people. One of the principals particularly focused his description of spirituality around what it meant relationally in the context of the school. There was a sense in which he wanted to focus his professional life on modelling values that were suitable for the secular, pluralistic, educational context in which he worked, and that he preferred to keep any religious meanings private. Later on in the data gathering process, two of the teacher participants from this school said they were aware that their principal did have some family religious affiliations. This principal explained that his values perspective of spirituality was supported by other educationalists like Russell Bishop (e.g. Bishop & Berryman, 2006), and the programme called Kotahitanga (meaning oneness or togetherness). His personalized narrative also included a strong sense of positivity and a love of life, which in turn was integrated with a wider educational narrative to develop 'good people,' through modelling caring relationships.

*We work hard at that in valuing people; relationships between people count, and again modelling what good interactions look like, what good people skills look like, what good interpersonal skills look like... You know, at the end of the day, we are trying to develop good people... so that children do know what we stand for, what is the difference between right and wrong, what is important, how to treat people and interact with people, then the real learning can happen after that, not before. Part of this spirituality is tied up with just the value of life. I love the life that I lead and I love New Zealand and I enjoy what I'm doing as a career... So again, part of spirituality is the importance of life; your life and other people's lives (BS, principal, 1:1).*

#### *Innate human dimension*

The principals were also able to describe spirituality as an innate human dimension, with internalized aspirations, and a range of behavioural characteristics. They understood spirituality was widely acknowledged in society but that there was no universal agreement as to its meaning. They explained their belief that people may derive meaning about spirituality through diverse personal, cultural and/or religious experiences. In this sense spirituality

was positioned as having relevance to many people in their school communities but also as problematic, through its lack of clarity and shared definition.

*I think everybody has a spirituality. I think some people don't connect it to what it is. And some people, their spirituality side is just a yearning or it might even be a loneliness or a hole or a deadness, in some people it's their cultures, and in some people it's a religious thing... some people have connected it up with what they call a spiritual or a religious element and other people appreciate the sunrise and sunset and that hooks in to their spirituality (YS, principal, 2:1).*

*I think that spirituality aspect that every teacher has is very open to other people... So if you're walking around, a very angry, bitter person, the children that you're working with will see that. If you're a tense person, if you're a very calm person, ... peace, quiet, calm, tranquillity... wanting to get to a higher place...that sort of thing will come out and children will receive that and particularly because children are children and are so open and aware of things.*

*That's why when in our [bilingual] unit with our Maori teachers, that's one of the things they look into is their spirituality, the children hook into it and have been from kohanga (Maori language pre-school) and it's that kawa (protocol) it's that Maoriness,... their wairua, (spirit of a person which exists beyond death) but it's there. And you could almost touch it...So it's very important that a teacher's wairua, whatever they are showing to the children is positive, because the children receive it (YS, principal, 2:2).*

For these three principals, spirituality was believed to be rationally constructed from perceptual evidence derived from experience and intuition, being developed and refined over time through social-cultural interaction. Their views were inclusive of philosophical, non-religious and religious, transcendent understandings. Furthermore, all three principals believed spirituality had personal and professional relevance being something they could reflect upon and articulate, something that informs their personal lifestyles as well as their professional beliefs, values and behaviours.

***Teachers' perspectives of spirituality – making sense of life and making sense of living***

*Purpose, passion and professional practice*

Diverse perspectives were found among the nine teachers in terms of their understanding of spirituality. Most of the teachers described spirituality as having both an internalised dimension in terms of beliefs, values and attitudes as well as an externalised application pertaining to socially and morally responsible behaviour. Seven teachers included existential meanings as part of their explanation of spirituality. For these people spirituality included beliefs about life, past, present and future. Several of these teachers incorporated philosophical or religious world-views. One of the teachers described her spirituality as the antithesis of materialism and hedonism. The following quote illustrates how spirituality informed a teacher's purpose in life and her passionate creed as a teacher.

*Having a belief that you're not just here to feed the grass at the end of it; you know, that there is a purpose to life and things like that. So to me there's a purpose and my view is that it's to help others and I believe that, you know, I believe in the Christian values. So I believe that there's a purpose to life. Spirituality is about the morals and ethics and your belief in perhaps why you exist and stuff like that.*

*So to me mine is to help others and to bring out the best in others so hopefully I would ... that's why I teach... Spirituality is ...to bring out the best in others... what you hope to do is to hopefully get others to think about other people in this world, that you're not just here to gain money and possessions, that relationships are important in life and treating other people with respect and leaving a good mark on the environment, family, whatever (YS, teacher Iris, 1:1).*

For most of the teacher participants, spirituality was linked to a deep sense of commitment to the children and a heightened awareness of engaging in trying to make a difference in their lives. Spirituality for most of the teachers contributed to their rationale to teach, informing and in some cases enabling their behaviour that characterised their teaching. For example,

*I don't have the privilege to speak openly about my belief in Jesus but expect them to know by how I care for the students that they, that there's something special about how I accept them, how I deal with their behaviour. I go the extra mile to care about their family, everything about them... What they eat, how well they slept last night, how are they socially with their peers.*

*'I do believe that the Bible...every part of it is applicable to us today... to me that is so important that I'm constantly referring to that so that I'm able to bring, you know, another perspective to the lives of others. I couldn't call myself a Christian if I didn't (YS, teacher Georgette, 1:1).*

Most teachers believed spirituality was important to them personally, their role as teachers, and especially in terms of their influence on children. These teachers explained that spirituality helped them to think about their students holistically. One of the teachers elevated her understanding of the practical outworking of spirituality to a level of importance above that of learning academic subjects.

*The best definition I came up with for me was, 'It's an internalization of the purpose of life and your role in it.' So that meant that as a teacher my role is to help people in the best way that I am able to. Help them to develop strong values and a strong sense of identity and help them to define their role in life. It is a very important part to me.*

*I think they're actually secondary, the 3Rs. I think we really have to make people feel good about themselves and secure in themselves to do anything really... and to see a sense of purpose (GT, teacher Abbey, 1:1).*

Several teachers conveyed a belief that spirituality is connected with personal identity, helping them to understand who they are. One of these teachers believed that the identity aspect of spirituality could help children to develop a sense of belonging by including local cultural identity, relationship with the land and connectedness to the cosmos. The identity dimension to spirituality was believed by this teacher to empower children who otherwise might feel disconnected in their lives.

*Going back into that spirituality stuff it's empowering the child I suppose empowering the child by letting them know where they've come from, who they are, why they are here and I think if the child knows their identity ...what sort of made them, what sort of people they've come from, how they lived then to how they live now, and we can actually see the changes that have taken place from way back then till now. It's called whakamana.*

*Whakamana is actually giving the child the mana to be able to say to anybody that asks them a question who are you from, how come you're here, why are you on this land, and things like that and I suppose that part of spirituality that being proud of oneself,*

*and being able to express oneself by knowing that, by that knowledge (YS, teacher Hemi, 1:2).*

#### *Individualism, transcendence and moral conscience*

All of the teachers' perspectives on spirituality were highly individualised. For example one teacher said, 'I think it's that belief in a higher being, but I believe spirituality means different things to different people. But often they have a higher being; whether it be God or a Buddha or whatever, or the environment, or the earth ... or something' (YS, teacher, Iris, 1:1). Most of the teachers in my study incorporated into their sense of spirituality their feeling of or belief in the influence of an invisible, transcendent guiding force, spirit or deity. The understanding of these feelings and beliefs were not always clear to participants. Nevertheless they were perceived to influence their moral conscience and lifestyle in tangible ways. These feelings or beliefs were not necessarily associated with religious teaching or religiousness, as the following quotes affirm.

*Spirituality is probably a belief that there's something guiding me in my morals and the way that I am. And I think that comes from my parents more than anything else. It's the way I've been brought up (BS, teacher Fiona, 1:1).*

*I find myself spiritual but not religious. So I've beliefs in the world, but I don't push them in the classroom and I don't really take on board what other people say about their religion, their spirituality. It's their thing for themselves. ... so I might find certain things immoral and other people find them fine to do in public, that sort of thing...I find that my personal, I don't know, the spirit, person, or thing behind me, that tells me yes and no,... that influences my spirituality... like a voice in your head saying that's just not right (BS, teacher Edward, 1:1).*

*I feel like there's a guidance that I couldn't probably explain, ... my belief systems are so tied up in that basically everyone, there's good in everyone, and that there's a guiding force that helps us to be better people, and to me life, if life was just about achieving things, and that you were just born and then you die, then that would be very empty (GT, teacher Claire, 1:1).*

#### *Influence of workplace*

All teacher participants described how their public school contexts affected the externalization of their inner spirituality. For most teachers this was a positive and challenging influence which implied a calling forth of their spirituality informed values of relational care. For some teachers it meant intentionally

avoiding inappropriate religious expressions of spirituality while retaining their beliefs in the form of values and behaviours appropriate to their school contexts. A couple of teachers explained how they treated the subject of evolution cautiously because of the diversity of children's views within their classes. For others it meant filtering out their private more liberal lifestyle and overlaying a more conservative, professionally appropriate one. One teacher, in describing the influence of the workplace, spoke of having multiple spiritualities. That is, a form of spirituality appropriate for school, and a more liberal spirituality for home.

In these ways, the workplace was perceived to influence their expression of spirituality so that it focused on qualities of character suitable to their secular school contexts. It also meant they avoided the deeper, personal, philosophical or epistemological arguments that underpin spirituality debate in the wider community. The following quote illustrates this theme.

*It's mainly the teaching of values to these children that I know a lot of them are not getting at home. I sort of don't take it on the God aspect but mainly the teaching of values, how to be a caring good person. Yes how to care for others, how to be sympathetic, all the aspects of not hitting, not bullying, all those things come under that, that's what I think of as spirituality (BS, teacher Debbie, 1:1).*

Debbie's comment about the 'God aspect' is contextualized as an appropriate professional response to the public state primary school where she teaches. In clarifying this she said,

*I have my beliefs but this is where it gets really hard. I feel really uncomfortable with talking to the children about my feelings about God, because I know that out there, there's a lot of controversy and you've got to be so careful that you're not going to tread on toes. I find it difficult. You've got to remain impartial, you have your own beliefs but you've got to remain impartial as the teacher. My spirituality is how I deal with people, how I treat people, how I respect people, my colleagues in particular. And so therefore that's hopefully, that modelling behaviour, is what the children pick up (BS, teacher Debbie, 1:1).*

### *Syncretism*

Most teacher participants described their understanding of spirituality in terms of a blend of diverse socio-cultural and religious ideas and experiences. In making sense of spirituality some of the teachers mixed together references to family life, Christian church teachings and experiences, Maori cultural perspectives of spirituality (wairua) and contemporary New Zealand social values. For these participants' spirituality was syncretised, an admixture of socio-cultural, religious perspectives, including individual and professional experiences. In the second quote Claire acknowledges that the influence of life experiences on spirituality is complex, and that both good and bad experiences can influence the development and understanding of one's spirituality.

*As a Maori teacher too our spirituality came from a lot of spiritual teachings... we call it hahi (church, religion) but different teachings about the Bible. They were impressed on us as children. A lot of it comes out in my teaching as well... I think my spirituality comes in understanding those children that I'm teaching...it is around aroha (love, affection, empathy, compassion). And we take it for granted as Maori because aroha has been one of the biggest things that comes through within Maori whanau (extended family) ... as I teach my children, I bring them in as one big family and there's a whanau situation for me actually and I probably make myself mum and dad for the day in teaching these children... That parental love that you have and the children tune into it quite easily because there's some that actually need that. And love is giving and being happy with the children (YS, teacher Hemi, 1:1).*

*[Spirituality is] an awareness of what's on the inside, my beliefs, so personally that would come from I was raised Catholic. So for me it comes from that but it's wider with life experience and stuff like that. And I think that values and principles become part of that but they're more guided by your beliefs, so in a way they are a reflection of your spirituality. Yeah I think also because my dad's Maori and so for me there's a cultural perspective there as well. It's almost like experience of your reaction often to different experiences like the good and the bad (GT, teacher Claire, 1:1).*

### *Ability to evaluate spirituality*

Most of the teachers described their perception that their own spirituality and that of others was able to be evaluated. This belief was based on their ability to reflect critically on their own beliefs and behaviours, and the beliefs and actions of others. This ability to evaluate spiritually was perceived to be helpful in

developing greater personal integrity and an awareness of others. Some of the teachers thought their spirituality was believed to be linked to their personality and the hidden curriculum within their teaching practice. For example,

*I think of spirituality as something that you bring yourself and it's your personality. I wouldn't consider myself to be a particularly spiritual person. I have an idea of a Christian background and I think that influences my knowledge, if you like, that I bring to the classroom... And therefore that obviously has an effect on my teaching. You are who you are as a person. That's what you bring to the classroom (BS, teacher Fiona, 1:1).*

*Spirituality for me is the centre of my being and so therefore when I work with the students on a daily basis it means that I portray to them the love of my example who is Jesus (YS, teacher Georgette, 1:1).*

All of the teacher participants were able to critically describe spirituality in terms of what was of value to them. They used language that expressed evaluative comments about their perceptions of the importance of spirituality and what spirituality ought to look like, in their own lives and in the context of education. Their perspectives of spirituality shaped their expectations of what spirituality ought to mean, especially in terms of the quality of interpersonal relationships.

Several of the teachers critically described spirituality by making reference to religious perspectives, using language referring to attendance at church or being a *good* Christian. Another teacher explained her assessment of what spirituality meant by including sacred writings from the Bible. Some teachers made evaluative remarks about spirituality by weighing up and identifying what might be termed an acceptable example of spirituality. In the quote below, the term *unspiritual* was understood to mean not the total absence of spirituality, but rather a deficiency in what the participant perceived spirituality to ideally embody.

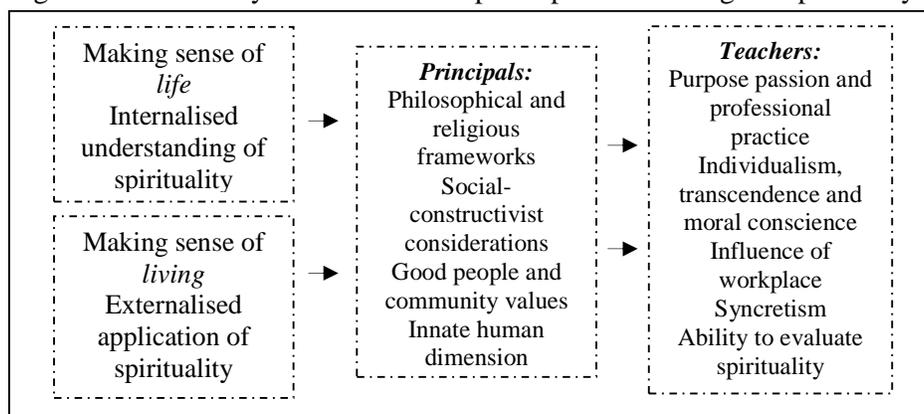
*Unspiritual people are hard, cold [on the] emotional side; doing for now, no hope in the future, clinical, no far-reaching effects of their lives. Spiritual people are softer, more relational, caring. (GT, teacher Bonnie, 1:1). It's something in you that's related to your concern for others and pastoral sort of care (GT, teacher Bonnie, 2:1).*

## Summary

‘Making sense of life and making sense of living’ highlights the two broad meanings participants gave to their understanding of the phenomenon of spirituality. Participants believed spirituality contributed to their personal identity and a sense of connectedness with people and life. The principals’ and teachers’ perspectives reflected the pluralism in New Zealand society. Their perspectives included world-views that were believed to have been shaped through various socio-cultural and in some cases religious experiences and teachings. Most of the participants believed in a transcendent dimension to spirituality, a guiding force, spirit or deity that influenced them in terms of their interpersonal values, morals and behaviour.

Participants were able to meaningfully connect their general understanding of spirituality to their educational workplace contexts. Participants believed that school contexts provided reciprocal opportunities for them to express their spirituality. All the principals and most of the teachers related spirituality to their purpose in life which included their commitment to their professional practice as educators. All the participants believed they could evaluate and reflect upon their own expressions of spirituality and the spirituality of others. However, participants also conveyed a sense of uncertainty and an incomplete understanding of spirituality. Participants described spirituality as a complex and private topic. ‘Making sense of life and making sense of living’ highlights participants’ descriptions that spirituality was perceived as a work in progress, reflecting influence derived from all of their life experiences.

Figure 3: A summary of the themes of participant’s meanings of spirituality.



## **Woven threads and patterns of connections**

### ***Introduction***

This second theme, 'Woven threads and patterns of connections,' addresses the question, 'What might spirituality in principal *leadership* mean to participants?' The theme builds on the previous findings by metaphorically describing the complex ways that participants wove personal understandings of life and living into professional practice.

The findings are organised under three sub-themes, intrapersonal aspects of spirituality in principal leadership, the influence of school context, and the practical application of spirituality in principal leadership. Together these three threads provide an understanding of the praxis of spirituality in principal leadership. Praxis refers to a continual critical reflective process, designed to integrate beliefs and practice in appropriate professional ways. Carr and Kemmis (1986), explain praxis by saying,

*It is not simply action based on reflection. It is action which embodies certain qualities. These include a commitment to human well being and the search for truth, and respect for others. Moreover, praxis is always risky. It requires that a person makes a wise and prudent practical judgement about how to act in this situation. ' (p. 190)*

### ***Intrapersonal aspects of spirituality in principal leadership***

#### ***Introduction***

Three intrapersonal aspects of spirituality in principal leadership are presented in the following section of the findings. The term 'intrapersonal' is used because it highlights the internal thinking and reflective processing that principal participants described as they sought to weave personal meanings of spirituality into their professional practice.

### *Integrated*

Principal and teacher participants used a range of terms to describe their internalized thinking about spirituality in principal leadership. Words such as ‘intertwined’ and ‘integral’ conveyed a sense that personal perspectives of spirituality were woven into professional thinking. The term, ‘it’s who you are’, suggested that the integrated nature of this phenomenon was difficult to isolate or confine to one particular area of principal leadership practice. Some of the principals stated that they could *not* separate spirituality from professional practice. The findings showed that spirituality was inter-connected with their praxis.

*It’s quite difficult to pick up the spirituality side of it because it’s so integral to with the way you live... everything that happens, I’m thinking, Oh Lord, how am I going to handle this, please help me to... It’s not something I separate out easily (YS, principal, 1:4).*

*I don’t know how you’d split spirituality, [from leadership] I know because spirituality is so deep to her, such an integral part of her, who she is and her daily life that I don’t think you could split it (YS, teacher Iris, 1:5).*

Each principal possessed unique internalized perspectives of spirituality. These perspectives included theistic and non-religious beliefs about children, strong values of care and commitment to social justice, a deep sense of moral responsibility, and various spiritual disciplines such as prayer. This internalization of spirituality and its integration into professional thinking was an ongoing process and inter-related with professional behaviour. For example one principal said,

*I couldn’t take spirituality out of my practice... because I’m thinking about why I’m doing it and why I’m here and why it’s important, who the people are. (YS, principal, 2:3)*

Each of the principals was able to describe spirituality as having a internalized personal dimension as well as a behavioural dimension. The internalization appeared to be a cognitive, emotional, and intuitive process related to life history such as family upbringing, significant life experiences, socio-cultural contexts, and religious teachings. It was also perceived as an on-going process, one in which the inner dimension to spirituality was believed to be able to change, and

develop. The following quote illustrates the integration of personal understandings of spirituality with professional critical reflection.

*I always pray, 'Lord let them see you, not me'. Because I know that I'm not perfect and I know that I can't do everything...I need those values of, that I hold strongly, of justice but also mercy, to come through and aroha. (YS, principal, 3:4)*

Some of the principal and teacher participants described this internal dimension of spirituality in terms of varying levels of thinking. Terms such as deep rooted, surface or shallow aspects of spirituality were discussed. The principals recognized that spirituality included their private or deeply held beliefs and thoughts. Some participants described spirituality in terms of their inner spirit which resided within their bodies. They also made distinctions between one's mind and one's heart. Being passionate about spirituality, the principals conveyed a sense of depth and motivation to this internalization of spirituality. For example,

*It must be his view on the world. It must be his cultural beliefs. It must be his philosophy of life and that resonates within a lot of people on the staff. It must be what he's found out through his faith, ...we know where he stands, so it's coming out of every aspect of him (GT, teacher Bonny, 2:3).*

*I would say I am passionate about my spirituality and I have quite strong beliefs, and quite deep rooted beliefs. I guess I see my principal-ship like a mission, not like a missionary as such, but like it's not like a job, it's a way of being able to help others and improve other people's lives and learning (YS, principal, 1:2).*

### *Intentional*

Principal participants believed their thinking about spirituality and its connection with leadership practice was influenced by the degree of intentionality to do so. For example, the principals described how they were passionate about certain educational values and goals because they were aligned with their spirituality perspectives. Some of the principals cited their understanding and thinking about a spiritual exemplar, Jesus, as a source of motivation for showing certain leadership conduct. Each of the principals described a sense of obligation or conviction to think and act consistently with their understanding of spirituality because they believed it was important to do

so professionally and morally. The principals' motivation to do so was also linked to their intention to walk the talk, and because they believed that integrity was an important aspect of leadership influence. All three principals described situations where they would remind themselves of their spirituality-informed values when working through problems. This ranged from situations when dealing with difficult children or when they were faced with a particularly challenging issue. Some of the principals intentionally engaged in spiritual disciplines such as prayer or the reading of sacred text before, during or after engaging in the more challenging aspects of their work.

*Really tricky situations, I'll pray about and I will have, and I'll believe that I'll have a feeling of a leading in those situations (GT, principal, 3:3)*

The principals acknowledged there were often times in their daily practice when their intentionality to integrate their spirituality was more at a subconscious level. They described their belief that there were times when their spirituality could respond automatically to situations without them necessarily having to stop and 'think about it'. This finding was understood in the context of the busyness of each principal's daily work and because of the high level of integration of spirituality within their lives. The subconscious levels of intentionality contributed to the principals' difficulty in ascribing actions directly to their spirituality.

*Well, I don't necessarily think I'm going to do this because of spirituality; I'm going to do this because this is what a good professional does (GT, principal, 1:5).*

*In ways yeah, in some ways... it's there... it's not really sort of, he's not waving his hand saying I'm doing this now [spirituality],... it's just there it's always... when he comes in the playground, walks in the playground, so I can just feel the way the kids, the whole thing changes when he comes out, ... not 'cause they idolise him, but to show respect for who he is (BS, Teacher Edward, 1:5).*

*I can see it [spirituality] in the way he deals with people, deals with situations, and the empathy he has with these children which are from some tough backgrounds (BS, teacher Debbie, 1:3).*

### *Filtering and fitting*

Filtering and fitting is a theme that relates to participants description of a self-managed cognitive and intuitive process by which their spirituality perspectives were responsively and purposefully integrated into their professional practice. Analysis of the data showed that the process involved critical reflective thinking, trial and error, and making adjustments according to what was thought appropriate. The filtering and fitting process drew upon the principals' professional expertise and experience, and was responsive to interpersonal situations that arose.

*It's about relationships, it's about communicating skills, I've got a triangle in my head, you've got a square in yours...But particularly if I'm talking around something in a secular school where I'm a leader, I have to make sure that my triangle is expressed in secular terms because we're a secular school... because the things that I recognize as spirituality other people would recognize it in a different language (YS, principal, 3:2).*

The principals' spirituality perspectives were also integrated into their professional thinking about the development and maintenance of cohesive, relational, and inclusive school communities. In achieving this and in order to model this, the principals spoke of a need to adapt and express their personal meanings on life and living into professionally acceptable ways for their public school contexts.

The principals filtering and fitting of spirituality into their thinking and behaviour was also guided by their desire to be authentic or consistent with their values and beliefs. The principals believed they were able to maintain a sense of personal and professional integrity in their practice. Thinking about the alignment between their espoused beliefs and values with their day to day practice was a vital part of this filtering and fitting process.

*I guess the most challenging is challenging myself that I am actually acting from my own values base and not from learned actions from watching other principals and that sort of thing. That's what I challenge myself most why am I doing this, you know what's behind this, where's this coming from? (YS, principal, 2:6)*

*I mean probably from a personal point of view I think that a lot of spiritual teachings are getting you to reflect on your actions and your beliefs and to see things from other people's point of view (GT, teacher Claire, 2:2).*

Filtering and fitting are active verbs, and as such they reflect the day to day practice that principals tried to make the best fit between their personal spirituality and their professional contexts. Different situations called for a reappraisal of previous actions and the adapting of new approaches. For example, in response to some feedback from a colleague, one of the principals edited the content in his weekly newsletters so as to make them more inclusive and acceptable to the wider community of the school. This feedback was different to previous positive feedback about the newsletter that he had received from a community survey. The particular comments in the newsletter that were of concern reflected the principal's beliefs about life and living. The term 'editing' is a helpful metaphor to describe filtering and fitting of spirituality to a particular audience.

*'In the newsletter, I include snippets out of the Word for Today [A Christian daily devotional booklet], but I'm careful to edit those so that they are not too much of a Christian perspective. But the feedback from parents from a survey, is that they liked that the Word for Today is in them (GT, principal 1:1).*

Filtering also conveys the idea that each principal placed standards or restrictions on what they allowed of their internalized spirituality to come through to the surface of their principal practice. They described how they screened out what was deemed too personal and private, or inappropriate to their professional work context. The term fitting is used to convey the sense by which principals adapted what they permitted of their spirituality, to best suit the particular situation at hand. For example, one principal, in describing this process, said he didn't need to deny his spirituality on the outside, but rather position it to a point where he felt it was professionally appropriate.

*Because the primary school is a secular organization, as a Christian I have to be aware of that and be careful how I express my faith, what I put in newsletters, how I react in certain situations. However I don't believe that I need to change myself to where I'm not showing my beliefs. I also let my staff know that I am a Christian, because I tell them about things...The staff all*

*know that I'm a Christian, but I don't go and actively try to convert people (GT, principal, 1:2).*

Some of the teacher participants described their awareness of the filtering and fitting of their principal's spirituality. They described incidences where their principals would fit spirituality perspectives into professional contexts in appropriate ways. These included expressions of hope, patience and care toward behaviourally disturbed students, and the inclusion of remarks in professional conversations derived from religious teachings.

*It comes [principal's spirituality] at different times. It could be informally, 'I was at church on Sunday and da di la di la', or it could be in a senior staff meeting, 'You know I heard a wonderful sermon on looking after others and the minister said...', and she might give an example or whatever. She uses it. She's not recreating a sermon or anything but will say, 'We had this example at church.' So it's not hidden away, it's not a separate part of her life.*

Researcher: Presumably she'd raise that illustration at a senior staff meeting to somehow complement what (*absolutely*) what you were discussing? (*Yep*).

*That's right, it's a supporting thing, it's not I heard this at church and I'm going to tell you to do this, it's nothing like that (YS, teacher Iris, 1:4).*

Some of the teachers were aware of their principal's personal spirituality but remarked how the professional expression of their principal's spirituality could be very strong but not problematic to the school context. This ability to allow spirituality to strongly come through but in an appropriate way is described in the following quote. This principal's professional expression of spirituality was based around widely held social and moral values, including care and positivity. The filtering and fitting of this principal's spirituality is not perceived as offensive or obtrusive, yet it appears to be respected.

*Murray is religious, he doesn't preach here at school but he still has a very strong spirituality coming out from him, he doesn't ever use that as a force to drive it home sort of thing, ... some people might not even know who he is at home, but still recognise his spirituality too (BS, teacher Edward, 3:4).*

Some of the teacher participants expressed their desire that spirituality in principal leadership needed to be filtered and fitted to the school context to

avoid compromising collegial relationships or the secular inclusive nature of the public school community. In the following quote the teacher refers to a preference for a more ‘surface’ approach to spirituality. This teacher describes a preference for what might be termed civic values and that any unusual or highly personal aspects of spirituality would be screened out of professional life.

*Well I do have reservations [about spirituality being expressed in principal leadership] from the point of view that some people have, can have a hidden agenda and if a person has deep spiritual roots that are not in keeping with my personal belief then I would prefer them to be more surface with their ‘good person stuff’. I would prefer to go with that, with what makes a good citizen...I would prefer to go to a more surface approach than go deeper in to the spirituality stuff (YS, teacher Georgette, 3:1).*

Filtering and fitting of spirituality was also affected by significant events. This was particularly noticeable to participants during tragic events in people’s lives and that of the school community. For example, in cases of sickness, accidents or bereavement, expressions of empathy, compassion and grief would naturally come through into principal leadership practice. However, in such circumstances expressions of *faith*, and *prayer*, could also be welcomed as appropriate within the public school context.

*If the opportunity arose and somebody asked me [to pray], I would. For example our staff have had grandchildren or had children that have been sick and I will ask if they would like me to pray or I say I have been praying for them (GT, principal, 1:2).*

*Because of an experience the principal has had, the principal has spoken more intimately of her relationship with God ...and has felt there has been a need to share with individuals her spirituality more strongly (YS, teacher Georgette, 2:3).*

Engaging in critical reflection was perceived by the principals and most teacher participants as an important, ongoing and challenging professional skill. They described being able to step back from situations, being able to consider the efficacy or appropriateness of responses to a situation and the soundness of the reasoning behind their leadership actions. This ability to critically reflect was perceived to help to shape the way spirituality was subsequently filtered and

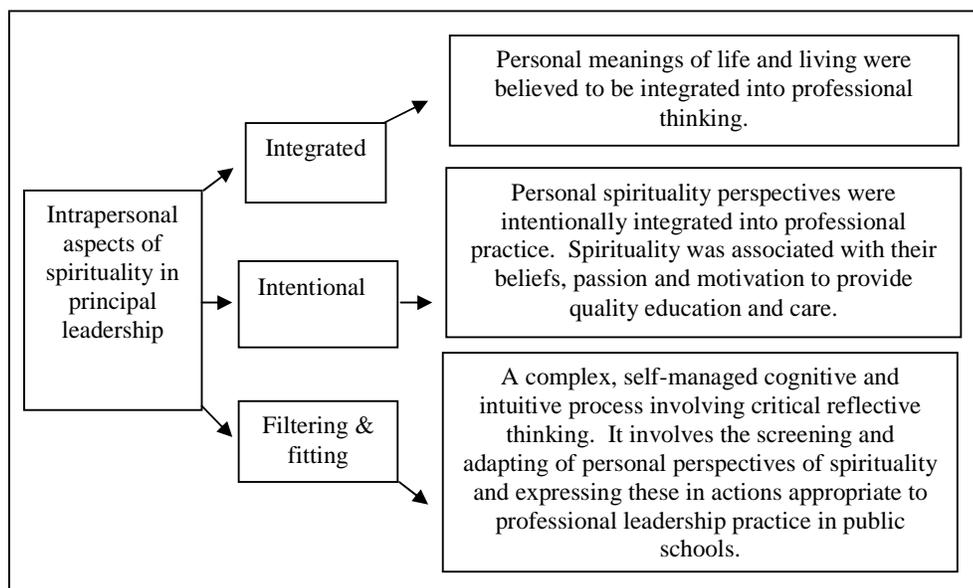
fitted into future professional practice. However, having the head-space or time to engage in spiritual reflection was not always easy.

*One of the things that can happen is that you can often just be wound up in your day and not reflect on what's happening or why you are doing something and so on. This is been a catalyst to make me think about things and to articulate what I believe and I've found that hard at times (GT, principal, 3:6).*

### Summary

This section of the findings has focused on three intrapersonal aspects of spirituality in principal leadership. It is the first of three themes that address the research question, 'What might spirituality in principal leadership mean to participants?' The findings have shown that personalised meanings of life and living were believed by the principals to be intentionally woven into their professional thinking. The findings also described a complex mental and practical process of filtering and fitting. This was a self-managed process whereby personal perspectives of spirituality were authentically connected to professional behaviour appropriate for public school contexts. The term filtering and fitting conveys an understanding that principals critically reflected on their thinking and actions and made responsive adjustments.

Figure 4: Intrapersonal aspects of spirituality in principal leadership?



## *Influence of school context on spirituality in principal leadership*

### *Introduction*

Each of the three public school communities was unique having its own socio-cultural composition, traditions, educational strengths, and needs. Greentree School was located in a middle socio-economic suburb of a rural town centre. It catered for 400-500 students between Years 1-6 of the public compulsory education system. Yellow-sun School was a medium to high socio-economic, rural, full primary school, catering for 200-300 pupils from Years 1-8. It included a Maori language immersion school within its organizational structure. Blue-sky School was located in a low socio-economic suburb of a large city, and catered for 300-400 pupils from Years 1-6.

The schools also shared a lot in common being co-educational, multi-cultural, State funded institutions following the New Zealand curriculum (2007). The schools were well established historically, and well resourced. Blue-tree school had undergone a significant period of renewal several years earlier which had been successfully led by the principal participant in this study. Yellow-sun School was undergoing a time of transition with the principal having been appointed within the past 12 months. Green-tree School was enjoying a positive and stable period, with the principal having had five years in the role.

The findings presented in this section show that each school context provided opportunities, expectations and limitations on the principals' spirituality in leadership. They are presented around two themes, daily public school life, and school culture and traditions.

### *Daily public school life*

The principals described how their particular school contexts and different daily situations provided opportunities for their spirituality to be included into their professional practice. For example situations arose that required them or invited them to be caring, show empathy, manage stressful situations calmly, pursue social justice, and show moral responsibility. In these ways principals believed their respective school contexts were able to influence their understanding and

application of spirituality in their leadership. In the following quote a principal identifies a significant change in his heart felt empathy for the disadvantaged students he has worked with over the years at his school.

*Being at Blue-sky school has basically revitalized my teaching in as far as having an empathy even more for children because some of them come from very difficult situations sort of quite different from perhaps you or I in our backgrounds that we were brought up. Yeah I think over the last six-seven years I've developed more heart for children (BS, Principal, 2:4).*

Some of the findings showed that school contexts could open up opportunities between the principals and teachers to discuss spirituality, and to integrate transcendent perspectives of spirituality into decision making processes. For example at one school a teacher and the principal were trying to work through a very difficult situation with a behaviourally disturbed student. Both the principal and teacher described how they professionally and prayerfully tried to find a way through the situation that would not result in the child being expelled.

As well encouraging spirituality, school contexts could also censure certain expressions of spirituality in principal leadership. In two different situations, two teacher participants described how they provided feedback to their respective principals about what they considered to be inappropriate religious expressions of spirituality. This feedback influenced a change in the way the principals thought about and integrated spirituality into their professional practice.

*There have been one or two issues in the early days... when Steve [pseudonym for the principal] used religion a bit, as opposed to spirituality and that did upset one or two people... but he realised that and stepped back so was a lot more careful...once it was pointed out to him, he listened and took it on board and is more circumspect in what he says (GT, teacher Abbey, 2:3).*

Each school also had a values system in place for guiding the behaviour of staff and students. The principals' promoted their school based values and were expected to model their school's values. The promotion and modelling of values linked closely with their perspectives of spirituality. Interim professional

standards (Ministry of Education, 1998) also provided the principals with an understanding of the important knowledge, skills and attitudes required in their leadership. Providing effective and responsive management and ensuring high quality delivery of the curriculum are part of the professional standards for principal leadership. The following quote shows an example of the woven patterns of connections between personal meanings of spirituality and the influence of the *secular* school context. The quote shows the participant's perception of personal beliefs being connected to moral behaviour, and professional boundaries through protecting the rights of parents and children. This suggests that spirituality in principal leadership can be responsive to both personal and professional standards.

*There are some parts of my spiritual life which I don't take to school publicly because that's not the place to do it. And I work in a secular work place, but my spirituality is part of my culture as well, it's part of who I am as a person, but it's also why I don't swear or why I don't blaspheme. It's all a part of the way you live your life...*

*But there are some things that I am tactful and careful about because of the context that I'm working in. It's not my job to evangelize at school...It will be going against a lot of my beliefs because parents send their children to school to have the parents' beliefs kept intact and valued as well (YS, principal, 1:4).*

#### *School culture and traditions*

Each school context was unique in terms of its traditions and social culture. For example, the schools celebrated in various ways religious and cultural festivals such as Easter, Christmas, Matariki (Maori new year) and Diwali (Hindu new year). All three schools had weekly half hour Christian programmes called 'Cool bananas' or 'Bible in Schools,' operating. One of the schools had a school chaplaincy programme in place for the support of students. I also observed a principal singing the New Zealand national anthem, 'God of nations at thy feet...', during a senior prize giving evening. While each of these examples is not uncommon in New Zealand primary schools, the principals in this study believed they were compatible with their spirituality. Each of these examples influenced the culture and values within the school in which the principals worked.

One of the schools had an annual tradition of raising money for the humanitarian Christian organization World Vision which involved the principal promoting and modeling the 20 hour famine. During the data gathering phase one school held a special ‘cleansing ceremony,’ a Maori cultural practice following the death of someone special who had been associated with the school. A Christian service led by a local church pastor was also included as part of the bereavement process within the school. These examples of traditions and social cultural practices illustrate a range of school influences in which the principals could express their spirituality through tolerance, generosity, joy, inclusiveness and compassion. They also afforded opportunities for the principals to express faith, reverence, sincerity, and beliefs in transcendent dimensions of spirituality.

One of the schools included a *Maori bilingual unit*. The principal of this school and one of the teacher participants, who taught in this unit, described how a greater openness existed in the bi-lingual Maori cultural context to a wider and deeper expression of spirituality. Personal and professional understandings of spirituality had greater freedom of expression. For example, the importance of aroha (love) and whanau (family) were prominent, but so also were theistic, supernatural beliefs, and karakia (prayer). They described how spirituality was perceived as an inseparable part of the day to day life and learning for the Maori people involved in this unit. These factors permitted a broader integration of spirituality into the principal’s praxis when engaging with the staff, students and parents associated with the culture of this section of the school.

*Our Maori students have spirituality expressed quite openly as part of their way they do school life in the Maori context ...it’s mostly, Christian, with an Anglican or Catholic bias. Our particular Christian influence within our Maori immersion classes is related to the church down at the marae (courtyard outside a Maori meeting house). (YS, principal, 1:2)*

This contextual influence of Maori culture on spirituality in principal leadership was also noted by the principal from Green-tree school. In the next quote he describes the preferential use of expressions of Maori spirituality over other perspectives.

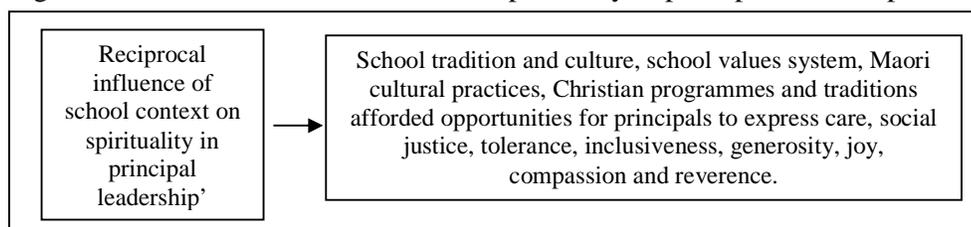
*When we have our staff meetings we have a karakia (prayer) at the beginning and the end of it. And so through the perspective of a Maori karakia if I stood up and said OK now I'm going to thank Jesus for the fact that we're going to have a staff meeting the jaws of most people would hit the ground. But if we stand up and say we'll have a karakia, it's fine (GT, principal, 2:6).*

Christian culture was also influential in each of the school institutions. As mentioned earlier each school had a 'Bible in Schools' programme or its more contemporary Christian values-based version, called 'Cool bananas'. These Christian educational programmes are permitted under the Education Act 1964, which empowers a Board of Trustees to 'close the school for the purpose of religious instruction and/or observance for no more than 20 hours a year' (Maxim Institute, 2010, p. 1). This provision also stipulates that student attendance is not compulsory and they can opt out if their parents choose. The presence of these programmes reinforced the importance of spirituality informed traditional values, beliefs and behaviour within the life of the school community. They provided a contextual influence on principals to model the values of those programmes in their own leadership practice, without being overtly religious.

### *Summary*

The principals believed that school contexts were influential on their integration of spirituality into professional leadership practice. School values systems, traditions, religious programmes, and Maori cultural practices, were some of the contexts described by participants that afforded opportunities and expectations for principals to express tolerance, care, generosity, compassion, joy, and reverence in their leadership. School contexts called forth appropriate spirituality in principal leadership and contributed to the development of spirituality in their leadership practice.

Figure 5: Influence of school context on spirituality in principal leadership



## *Practical application of spirituality in principal leadership.*

### *Introduction*

That spirituality might have a practical application to professional practice was implied in the principal participants' personal understandings of spirituality, making sense of life and *making sense of living*. The intrapersonal aspects of spirituality in principal leadership showed spirituality to be integrated intentionally into professional thinking. Personal meanings of spirituality could also be internally filtered and fitted through a critical reflective process to be appropriate and responsive to the role of principal leadership. School contexts were also believed by participants to provide opportunities for the integration of spirituality.

Each of the three principals and most teacher participants described a range of examples that personal meanings of spirituality were perceived to be practically applied into the role of leadership. The findings pertaining to these practical applications are presented around three separate but inter-related themes, professional tasks, modelling leadership styles, and resilience. They provide the third woven thread and more patterns of connections into the meaning and praxis of spirituality in principal leadership. The following two quotes highlight some of the participants' beliefs and perceptions. The first quote describes the belief that spirituality is deeply woven into the person of leadership and the style or approach taken in that role. The second quote shows the perception that transcendent meanings of spirituality can make a tangible contribution to educational leadership capability as well as performance.

*Your spirituality is 'who you are'... it will come through in the things that you do and [the] way you approach things and your discussions [it] will come through (YS, teacher, Iris, 3:2).*

*I don't believe I'm extra special in lots of things, but God has brought me to be where I am and what I do as a principal (GT, principal, 1:5)*

### *Professional tasks*

This first theme presents examples of a range professional tasks in which participants believed personal meanings of spirituality were practically

integrated into principal leadership. These tasks include the development and implementation of educational policy, enhancing and sustaining school climate and culture, and the management of personnel. The tasks described are typical of any principal's professional role. However, the findings show that for these principals and most of the teacher participants, spirituality was perceived to contribute towards practical outworking of these tasks.

The next quote illustrates this finding. The participant describes his perception that spirituality is integrated into the preparation and performance of daily tasks and future responsibilities. Spirituality is linked with performing at 'big' events in the life of the school, expressing compassion, maintaining self-control during confrontations and when feeling under-equipped for a particular task.

*There are numerous things that happen in the school day that are coming up that I pray about. If I know there's a big occasion to come up or some issues, I'll pray..., I pray to God often before I give a speech. Sometimes it goes well, sometimes it doesn't, but I do get that help. If there are staff issues, I pray that I will have His compassion and see and handle the things in a way that He would want me to.*

*I can have a tendency that if people come out offensively, I might bite back...There are times when things come up that are totally out of my depth, that I'll ask God for guidance. (GT, principal, 1:5)*

Under the Education Standards Act (2001), Boards of Trustees are responsible in a governance role, along with the principal and staff, for the development and implementation of their respective school charters. Charters are important educational documents affecting the direction and quality of education at schools. Included in school charters are mission, values and vision statements as well as strategic and annual plans. In the context of *working with her Board of Trustees in revising the school's charter*, one of the principal participants described how she consciously integrated her spirituality into the consultative process. Although engagement with the school community is a legislative requirement, this principal said she believed it was important to do so from her spirituality perspective to take a listening, inclusive approach to the diverse range of views expressed by members of the school community. She also explained that where appropriate she was able to talk about values arising from

her spirituality that related to her passion for quality education and care of children. One justification for this was that she would then be able to authentically live out the charter in her leadership practice within the school. Furthermore, she explained that while she ‘played’ a role in the shaping process of the charter, being a member of the School Board, she also ‘prayed’ a role.

Another professional task each principal engaged with was the *development and maintenance of climate and culture* of their schools. All three principals made links between their internalised spirituality perspectives and how they sought to develop a safe, caring and high quality learning community. This included the daily task of reinforcing and promoting the core values of their schools and providing effective teaching and learning. In the next quote personal spirituality values are woven into professional leadership tasks of ensuring the school climate and culture is safe, relational, life-skills based and focused on a positive vision.

*Having a strong values base is part of my spirituality and making sure that children are taught and know that even though home might be a pretty tough place, when they enter the school, it's safe. We try and make it fun, we try and connect with all children, and teach those people... life skills ... we're trying to develop a society, that are basically good people (BS, principal, 1:1).*

Maintaining school climate and culture was also associated with the leadership tasks of communicating high expectations and in the recruitment of new staff. Both of these tasks were believed to include the integration of spirituality. Principals described how their spirituality was integrated into their deliberations over applicants and in their desire for new employees to be able to support and model the core values of their schools. For example, one principal described how his perspective of spirituality contributed to his passionately held expectation that every child needed not only to have excellent teachers every year but also teachers who would care deeply for their students. This principal wanted to employ only staff who would be good role models to the children consistent with the culture of the school.

*When I employ new staff in the school, I'm actually trying to employ good people. I obviously have good teachers, and good teachers are good care takers, but they've actually got to be good people inside (BS, principal, 1:1).*

The principals also discussed their spirituality in the context of *evaluating the effectiveness their schools* and in providing leadership in the area of professional development. Some of the principals believed they acted out of a moral obligation to provide staff with the support they needed. One principal believed she integrated her spirituality by acting honestly in regard to concerns she had about the quality of some aspects of the teaching and learning at her school. This resulted in her successfully applying for a Ministry of Education funded 'Assess to Learn' contract. This contract was then believed to have helped some staff to improve their professional practice and the learning outcomes for students. Another principal cited how he believed spirituality was integrated into his leadership decision to enlist the teaching staff in the *Kotahitanga programme* (Literally meaning 'unity'). This programme, which commenced in 2001, is a research and professional development programme in secondary and primary schools to help reduce educational disparities through raising educational outcomes for Maori students. It was believed that such an intensive course would help promote values and relational teaching practices in the school, issues that he identified as dear to his personal meanings of spirituality and his professional responsibilities as principal.

Another principal believed that he expressed his spirituality through protecting his staff from unimportant administrative issues, so they could focus on providing quality teaching and learning. He also preferred to engage in whole school staff development around the really significant educational needs affecting the children at their school. The following quote, illustrates a teacher participant's perception of the practical application of spirituality in principal leadership. Connections are woven between the intentional integration of personal meanings of spirituality, his love for children, and a hope for their future lives, with professional leadership in literacy.

*Researcher: Now when you think of spirituality, the values, that he [Murray] espouses and holds dear, do you see that spirituality being linked with this push for improved literacy?*

*It comes in with a caring so much about these children. 'Cause I know that he wants the very, very best that we can give these children. Because it's the love of the children, the love of the child, in wanting their life to be probably hopefully more meaningful as they get older (BS, teacher Debbie, 2:4).*

Personal meanings of spirituality were believed to be helpful in principals' thinking, attitudes and actions when *working with behaviourally disturbed students*. Worldviews, beliefs and values, along with their professional skills were woven together to help manage challenging situations, provide a sense of justice and care for all parties involved. In doing so, their intentions were not only to bring about behavioural compliance with school rules, but they were also designed to facilitate social and academic improvement. In the following quote the principal describes this perception of a close inter-connectivity of spirituality with management skills.

*I suppose I find it a little bit hard to separate them [good management skills and spirituality] because they are sort of intertwined with what I do (GT, principal, 1:5).*

Some teachers explained that their principals' involvement in the remedial processes with troubled children was deep, sincere and sustained over time. One teacher described how she believed the ability of her principal to engage in behaviour management of children came from his heart, from a positive mindset and that he was not put off by the 'few' results achieved. Spirituality in principal leadership in this case was linked to a high intrinsic value of the individual child, irrespective of the child's problems and performance. In the following quotes, two of the teacher participants express their perceptions of this aspect of spirituality in principal leadership. In the first instance, there is a strong sense of transcendence in the description provided. The second quote incorporates a powerful religious term as a euphemism for behavioural transformation.

*Yes, I think I mentioned this in the first interview where there are times when we could stand down a student when she is prepared to use that example of love beyond, ... of putting our feelings aside and doing it for the student, knowing that they are created and that there is potential there ... her ability to care beyond what we are capable of, to have empathy beyond our means is probably where she comes in full play in that sense... and*

*spirituality is the underpinning effect...she has like an almost supernatural ability to do that (YS, teacher Georgette, 2:4).*

*We've had some very tough children come into our school and it's been the way he's treated them... it's not been a matter of oh, look it's just a waste of time. What he's trying to do is find ways how we can turn these kids around...and I think that comes from his love of the child, [he] thinks that all children can be 'saved' shall we say...turned around, and that has happened not just in one instance, you know, we had probably about three or four children ...so you know it is encouraging for you as a teacher to I think find, keep trying to find ways to deal with them (BS, teacher Debbie, 2:3).*

In another extreme example, relating to the suspension of a behaviourally troubled student, one of the principals described how spirituality was intentionally integrated into the behaviour management decision-making process. In doing so she believed it helped her gain a new perspective on the problem and helped her cope with the emotional strain of the situation. In the latter part of this quote there is a sense that this aspect of spirituality provides tangible resources which have been drawn on in the past and found to be helpful. The comments also reinforce the woven connections between intrapersonal aspects of spirituality, school contexts and practical applications, highlighting the praxis of spirituality in principal leadership.

*With a suspension... one of the hardest things to do is to stand back objectively from a situation and get your 'facts' ... and I really pray hard through that, then I can get a clear mind and I can stand back from my own emotions, my stress and just sort of try and take a breather and I just ask God to help me see it clearly and objectively... and I often find that I can see things through different eyes ...*

*I guess what I'm saying is there are core principles and values under that, that are spiritual, from our Judeo-Christian culture ... but also I'm drawing on my spiritual resources and asking God to help me to be able to do that because I need help out of myself to be able to do that (YS, principal, 3:3).*

The findings showed that principal participants' personal meanings of spirituality were intentionally integrated into their practice when working through *leadership dilemmas*. Principal participants described how they sometimes found it difficult to care for and meet everyone's needs consistently and fairly. Personal beliefs and values were described by the principals as being

present in the *midst* of the dilemmas and drawn upon to help find ways through the impasse. One of the principals said he reminded himself of the values he believed were important and to model them consistently in the challenging aspects of professional practice. In the following quote a principal describes an example of spirituality in an ethical dilemma. The needs of a disturbed and vulnerable child are elevated above what would have been a legitimate and easier decision, to expel the student.

*A couple of years ago we enrolled a child ... with a lot of garbage as far as his background goes. We sort of knew of it from his previous school and overnight it changed the culture of the school...When XXXXX arrived he moved to number one only through his bullying, sickening behaviour... Later, I mean you are reflective of what on earth triggered that? It was XXXXX, and because we are in this ethical dilemma of dealing with XXXXX, we could have kicked him out in the first 5 minutes but we didn't and he could have spent more time out of school but he needed to be in school and working with kids and adults (BS, principal, 1:5).*

Two of the principals also believed that reading passages from the Bible and reflecting on their application to professional practice was helpful in gaining an understanding of the way to proceed through dilemmas. In the following quote the principal describes how she often tried to critically reflect on her belief in the exemplary and selfless leadership example of Jesus to assist with her professional decision making when faced with challenging situations. This quote, along with the previous one, illustrates the connections between personal meanings of spirituality and the praxis of spirituality in professional practice.

*I try and think often what would Jesus do, how would Jesus cope with this? If Jesus was going through what I'm going through how would he react? And quite often if I'm going through something quite challenging, I'll read the gospels and try to find something in what Jesus would have done (YS, principal, 1:3).*

The data provided some examples where spirituality in principal leadership was evident in *one-off tasks* that principals have to engage in. One teacher described a scenario which involved a spiritual cleansing ceremony at the school. The teacher believed the spirituality in her principal's leadership was integrated into this event in terms of supporting its purpose and content. This case of

bereavement also illustrates how a public school can accommodate a more overt religious and cultural expression of spirituality. The following quote highlights the teacher's perception that the principal's spirituality in leadership was woven in with the traditional cultural practices of the local community.

*It was suggested that we have a cleansing of our school after a situation had occurred and alongside the Maori community, who talk about spirits, which is what spirituality is of course, it's the involvement of spirits, alongside the request for those bad spirits to go, was [the principal's request] to bring a Christian pastor in who could talk about the Holy Spirit which is present and will still care for us. So there was the balance brought there in a very real way... so I felt that... perhaps the person who didn't have that firm spiritual base may not have done that (YS, teacher Georgette, 3:3).*

#### *Modelling leadership styles*

All three principals were able to describe links between their personal meanings of spirituality and their espoused leadership style. The findings showed that each principal's espoused leadership style was an eclectic leadership practice, being a unique blend of personal, professional, and contextual factors. Connections between spirituality and the modelling of servant, transformational, moral and relational leadership styles are presented in the next section. The findings showed that relational leadership was a significant style, possessing characteristics commonly perceived by participants to be indicative of spirituality. The findings also showed that spirituality in principal leadership was imperfect. Principal participants' believed the integration of personal meanings of spirituality into professional leadership style, was a continual process and one that was directed towards improvement.

Modelling leadership style was described by participants euphemistically as 'walking the talk.' Each principal's spirituality in leadership embraced high moral values such as honesty, care, and justice. As well as being important in terms of professional standards, morals were also believed to be an integral part of their personal meanings of spirituality. Morals were linked to the way they made sense of life and made sense of living. Some of the principals linked their motivation to demonstrate high morals values to a transcendent belief in a higher lawgiver to which they believed they would be accountable.

Each principal described his/her awareness of the importance of walking the talk in leadership practice, and the influence it could have on their school climate and culture. They understood the need to personally demonstrate their school's value systems, and their own personal values and beliefs. They recognised the limited effect of only remonstrating about undesirable behaviour. The findings showed the principals wanted to have personal and professional integrity in their leadership practice. They were aware of the problems associated with hypocrisy, and they desired alignment between their personal meanings of spirituality and what they modelled through their leadership. In the following quote the principal describes his practice of modelling self-control. His internalised personal values are woven together with the contextual influence of his highly visible profile, and his goal of influencing the school community to follow his example.

*They are looking all the time, when we say 'looking', it's parents, staff, children and any little glitch in what you say or if you're talking about a behaviour issue, even though you might be wickedly angry, on the situation and behaviour, you've actually got to model that control, because that's what you want to be able to impart in the kids, the parents and the teachers (BS, principal, 1:3).*

The principals were able to elaborate on the characteristics they believed described their styles of leadership. Two of the principals included reference to *servant leadership*, which they believe connected their personal meanings of spirituality with professional practice. They both made sense of this concept of serving in leadership through what they believed was exemplified in the life of Jesus and in the writings of the Bible. They explained that they felt it was incumbent on them to endeavour to serve their school community in a similar manner. Not in the sense of being an autocratic ruler, but a leader who is other-centred, seeking to lead with humility. The quote below illustrates the depth of thought and intentionality underpinning the principal's integration of personal meanings of spirituality with modelled leadership style. He does not position his leadership style on a well known contemporary educational writer but chooses to develop his rationale around a spiritual exemplar.

*Again I would say that the person I look to is Jesus and this again is what he did,...he washed the feet of his disciples. Again, he*

*also said that we had to be as a child to get into heaven. This is some of the things we have to look at in leadership is that we don't start putting ourselves up on a pedestal. When you start holding yourself up like that, it's at that time you are going in your own power instead of Jesus' power... my role model is Jesus, and Jesus' model is the servant model. I said that to ERO and that I use the servant model and they quoted Giovanni, or...*

Researcher: Sergiovanni?

*Yep that's it, and that's what he quoted first of all, and I said no, 'Jesus'. Because that's the model I'm working on and I think that when Jesus washed the disciples' feet, the other things when he said he came to serve and so on. So I would hope, and I would believe that that is coming through in the style of leadership and modelling. And I think that is one of the most powerful things, if not if you're seen as hypocritical, it doesn't work (GT, principal, 1:3)*

The findings showed that the principal participants believed their personal meanings of spirituality contributed to their engagement in activities that were *transformational*. Integrated into their modelled leadership styles were a range of spirituality-informed beliefs. For example, the intrinsic value of children, a deep sense of social responsibility, a positive outlook on life, and a moral obligation to ensure effective delivery of quality teaching and learning. These spirituality-informed beliefs when integrated into their leadership practice were believed to contribute to changes in staff, students and the culture of the school. Some teacher participants attributed transformational outcomes to their perception of spirituality in their principal's leadership. For example in the way their principal sought to *turn around* troubled students, facilitating their social re-integration and reversing disengagement with school-based education. Improvement in the core values of the school was another tangible way that some teachers believed their principals modelled transformational leadership.

In the following quote the principal connects her transformational leadership practice with values of equality and social justice derived from her personal meanings of spirituality. Two aspects of transformational leadership style can be identified. Firstly, transformation of teaching staff through modelling empowering, distributed leadership, and secondly, transformation of children by providing timely and compassionate support.

*I guess in leadership I try and challenge people to do their own thinking and do their own leadership rather than standing up the front saying it all myself, to empower other people. I try to be quite transformational so that other people are given the tools they need, I send them on courses, I provide them with resources, what do you want to do and how can we help make it happen and that sort of thing or ask them the challenging questions so that leadership grows in other people.*

*Researcher: And does that directly link to values of your spirituality?*

*Well, I think it does because it's to do with valuing people as being not less important than you or more important. God created us all equal and that's where I come from. I'm no better than anybody else. (YS, principal, 1:3)*

*So a child who doesn't have enough to eat or has a poor background, or perhaps we've got some CYFS children[Child, youth and family services, a department of the Ministry of Social Development], rather than waiting for something, I'll kick in fairly quickly and get what they need, because I think they are as valuable as I am...I think a lot of my spirituality comes around that social justice and support for other people, that I guess is where I fit my spirituality into my principal-ship (YS, principal, 1:2).*

Characteristics of *moral leadership* practice were also described by the principals in this study. Morality is a controversial subject with debate existing over the socially constructed and relative nature of morality. From the principal interviews, the findings showed that spirituality was believed to contribute to each principal's understanding and outworking of their sense of moral behaviour. This meant that for one of the principals a personally held, high regard for life and the care of others guided his moral behaviour. For two of the principals, transcendent, supernatural perspectives of morality were influential on their moral practice. Many of the descriptors associated with servant, relational and transformational leadership styles are also applicable to moral leadership. Not deceiving or lying in matters of school finances, not being judgmental and not blaspheming or swearing, were some additional moral behaviours described by principal participants which they believed characterised their leadership styles.

While legally it was incumbent on the principals to behave honestly, for these principals their spirituality also affirmed the need to be honest and was

believed to help them to *be* honest. Furthermore, spirituality-informed moral leadership was also linked to each principal's intention to encourage the development of a moral organisational culture. That is, the principals believed that if they modelled *moral* leadership, then it might contribute to the development of a moral climate across the institution.

*I work in a secular work place, but my spirituality is part of my culture as well, it's part of who I am as a person, but it's also why I don't swear or why I don't blaspheme. It's all a part of the way you live your life. (YS, principal, 1:4) I guess the values will be...I'll probably describe them as the fruits of the Spirit, lined up with things like integrity and honesty. (YS, principal, 1:3)*

*But we have to challenge ourselves as to what right have we to judge people. That the way they do things, isn't necessarily the way we do things... So when they have a problem, they'll come and talk to me about it because I'm not judging them. And we are here to help the kids (YS, principal, 1:3).*

The findings showed that characteristics of *relational leadership* were commonly connected by participants with their perception of spirituality in principal leadership. The dominant characteristic in this style is the centrality and importance placed on quality professional and caring relationships between the principal, staff, students and parents/caregivers. Spirituality in principal leadership praxis, while not causative on its own for quality professional relationships, was perceived by these principals and some teachers to contribute to their understanding of relational leadership and to assist with their endeavours to lead relationally. The following quote highlights a teacher participant's description of her principal's consistent respect towards another colleague. The teacher links the principal's relational integrity with the integration of his personal spirituality into professional practice.

*I can think of a staff member that has left, and I was so pleased to see the back of this staff member, ... there's no way that she'd ever have known that he [the principal] thought any less of her than all the rest of us, ... he treated her the whole time with great respect and ... it was ... hats off to him really, if he hadn't been such a good Christian person, another principal would've been going yeah, one day to go, two days to go, sort of thing,..... he wouldn't want to say anything about anyone like that ...she was a pain in the neck,... but there was nothing in his manner that*

*would have given that away...that he thought like that (GT, teacher Bonny, 3:3).*

One of the principals described how he connected his espoused value of relationships with his practice of relational leadership. In the following quote prioritization of time for relationship building with students is emphasized. He also describes how he engages with students in a balanced way, hugging, joking, having fun as well as having serious conversations. The principal's personal meanings of spirituality were believed to be integrated through a self-disciplined daily effort to care for people not just in the good times but in the tough times as well. He also identifies the modelling of non-bullying, non-threatening leadership as a key ingredient of his relational leadership style.

*I've just got to keep on remembering, 'you've said that relationships are important.' So when they [the children] come in to engage, so naturally with you, you've got to make sure you are never too busy. You know we hug kids, we joke with kids, we have some fun and we have some serious times too. When we talk to correct behaviour, we've got to model that we are doing it in a reasonable, non-bullying, non-threatening way (BS, principal, 1:3)*

Another principal explained how she applied aspects of her spirituality in the reflective processing of her relational leadership, believing that it assisted her intention to build positive relationships with colleagues. The following quotation demonstrates an awareness of the gap that can exist between relational intentions and relational reality. There is an added dimension to this finding in that the principal desires the relational quality between her and others be attributed not to her own natural personality but to someone else.

*But I know whatever I want to be like I'm not necessarily like that all the time because you actually can't see what you're like. So I'm really trying to say, 'Lord if I'm in this situation what's coming out to other people that they're receiving let it be you, let it be aroha or the kindness or what's real because it's so easy to think you're being kind when you're actually not. Or think you're being fair when actually you've gone in with a pre-judged conclusion (YS, principal 34).*

Another finding was that personal meanings of spirituality were believed to contribute to the repairing and rebuilding of professional relationships that had been disaffected in some way. All three principals affirmed that their relational

leadership as principals was not about perfection, and each spoke about times when they needed to work through mistakes. One of the teacher participants remarked, 'Spirituality in principal leadership is not about perfection, but it is real, genuine' (BS, teacher Edward, 3:5). In the following quote one of the principals expounds upon his integration of spirituality in relational leadership. He refers to taking ownership of mistakes, showing forgiveness to those who had offended him, and remedying problems as soon as practically possible.

*It's so important that at times when you make a mistake, you actually say, "I've made a mistake". And for children to see it and hear it and simply you know, I've made a mistake or we needed some more help here and yeah, that's really, really important too. And with parents, I mean often showing forgiveness and if it needs to be fixed, a teacher has made a mistake and could have handled it better, then turn around and say, "Well, its here in black and white, so we do it differently next time (BS, principal, 1:3).*

Principal participants believed their spirituality contributed to their ability to manage relational leadership. In the following quote, another principal explains how his personal meanings of spirituality were woven into his leadership praxis to help him be forbearing, and cope with feelings of anger. Spirituality in this case is believed to provide a source of inspiration and encouragement to endure difficult relationships. He also acknowledges that people can easily be offended by unintentional oversights and the need to be reflective about why people react the way they do.

*I think it's really important the forgiving side. There are issues that come up, that as a leader in the school, you can take things personally, and you can't afford to. So I give them to God. I say, look I might not be able to solve that particular issue, ...when you feel fear or you feel angry about something... again, I would ask forgiveness, and use Jesus as an example where He had his beard pulled out, He was hit and saw all the different things that happened before He was crucified and if He can put up with that, and that wasn't justified, well then I should be able to put up with things that I might encounter (GT, principal, 1:5).*

*That realisation that people can be deeply hurt by a simple oversight, that has maybe jogged in me a part of more I suppose a reflective principal part...*

Researcher: How did spirituality help you reconcile yourself to those people?

*I went and saw the person and said look, I'm really sorry (GT, principal, 3:5).*

Being able to laugh together and model a sense of humour to both teachers and students was another way that spirituality was believed to be linked with relational leadership. Laughter and a love of life, as one principal described it, was an important part of his personal meaning of spirituality. Admitting to staff that trialled organisational changes hadn't worked, and being able to laugh about them; not taking some things too seriously was also believed to be an important part of relational leadership, modelling that things don't always go right and it's alright for mistakes to be made. This expression of spirituality was recognized as an important counter-balance to the serious and often stressful nature of the educational contexts in which the principal and his staff worked.

*I mean you model in the staff room sometimes when you engage in a new project or hey, we'll give something a try, and at the end of the day, have a bit of a laugh and say that was a pretty stupid idea anyway, but we gave it a try...And laughter and humour is really, really important as far as spirituality (BS, principal, 1:3).*

Spirituality was believed by the three principals to assist with *their* ability to respond relationally to significant situations in other people's lives, such as grief and loss. Personal meanings of spirituality were believed to help *these* participants engage in the grieving process with empathy and compassion. One principal spoke of the importance of sharing in the good and difficult experiences children face, and how children need to see how adults cope with unforeseen circumstances. The principal identifies in the following quote that grieving can be done in a variety of ways which is appropriate for public school contexts.

*Well, we had an example of that where it came to be a real, a situation where a girl... died, one of our pupils ... and we had to go through the grieving process. Our kids would have seen all the staff visibly upset, kids were upset, parents were upset and that was a very sad situation and we grieved together in a variety of ways which was appropriate (BS, principal, 1:3).*

Relational leadership, especially in terms of confronting student misbehaviour was particularly challenging. Misconduct by pupils invariably led to relational

disconnection. The principals explained the importance of showing troubled students what positive relationships look like, of building a rapport with the children which would hopefully assist with their socialization into the learning culture of the school. In the following critical incident the principal describes his praxis of integrating personal meanings of spirituality into relational leadership. He includes reference to his 'heart' and his 'spirit'.

*A new boy that's enrolled in our school that's come from another school, he's got lot's of issues,... I rang up his mother to come into school today, so we could talk about how he's going... because his behaviour was unacceptable he's having difficulty with other children, he's got problems in class... he's ripped up his books he's got out of his seat, he's thumped the walls, he's cried, he's done all sorts of things to the point,...was I going to still be ignoring these things or am I going to intervene... And in my heart I prayed and in my heart it seemed, 'Just keep going'... this afternoon he was transformed.*

*He changed, he wants to get back into class. He sat down, he's written a page of work, he's been extremely polite and so on. Whereas if I hadn't been able to be reassured I may have done something different ...I could feel my spirit leading me and saying, 'Don't growl at him, don't growl at him, just stay calm, just talk... just pick up his books and put them back on his desk, explain to him again there are two things you need to work on is that when you're asked to work you've got to work and your attitude (GT, principal, 3:3).*

To lead in relational ways sometimes meant the principals felt vulnerable. They felt vulnerable to making mistakes, vulnerable to criticism and harm in pursuing their educational beliefs and values. This was illustrated by one of the principals during a situation when a very angry parent came to his school office about a matter concerning a child and a teacher. The principal worked hard to calm a dangerous situation in a caring relational manner, placing himself potentially in harms way. He believed that his relational leadership response was consistent with and assisted by his perspective of spirituality.

Another principal described an entirely different scenario where some oversights in relational leadership resulted in tension among the staff. The context involved the principal's desire to combine an annual school fair with fundraising for a World Vision project in Africa. The intention was to model to the school

community the idea of doing something practical to help others in need. A lack of inclusiveness in the planning resulted in disunity among staff over the proposal. Once the mistakes and concerns were brought to the principal's attention, this principal relationally went about to resolve the problem. This was achieved through an inclusive and empowering staff meeting, where the issues were discussed and a vote taken, resulting in the proposal being rejected.

Teacher participants from this principal's school acknowledged that their principal's spirituality, although linked to good intentions had contributed to the tension. However they also acknowledged that spirituality was apparent in the resolution process through the actions he took such as humility, listening carefully and submission to the consensus of the staff.

The findings also revealed some difficulties existed when the principals wanted to lead relationally yet at the same time, were engaged in *leadership for change*. One of the principals engaged in a process of classroom observations with the intention of caring for and improving the quality of learning outcomes for all the children. However, having the principal appraise classroom practice in this direct manner, while it provided important information for subsequent decision-making, resulted in some tension between certain teachers and the principal. In the following quote, the intention for relational connectivity is juxtaposed with the admission that the process of leading for change involved confronting the status quo. For this principal, spirituality was linked to both of these goals.

*We are beginning to develop a culture where we can challenge each other and challenge things that perhaps were taught or held to prior to my being there. And be able to disagree with each other but still maintain professional relationships... And so I think spirituality for me is about being real and open and honest with each other. Caring for another person's point of view and where they're coming from and be able to understand where they're coming from and allow them to be that person (YS, principal, 2:1).*

The goal of bringing about change in a professionally relational manner did not always equate with the intended results. The following quote from one of the teacher participants regarding this scenario suggests there was room for more relational connectivity and consideration between the principal and staff. It also indicates that this need was disaffecting the leadership for change that

the principal was pursuing. This example illustrates how spirituality can shape relational intentions but does not guarantee relational outcomes.

*To me... you can't come in and change this, that and the other, until you have shown care, concern and people can show care and concern for you ... and together you can change things... or make things better or whatever... so I think relationship building is important before anything else... you'll be a more effective boss if you have people on side (YS, teacher Iris, 3:5).*

Overall, the findings in this study suggested that for these three principals, their intention and perceived ability to be relational in their style of leadership was attributed to a number of spirituality-informed beliefs and values. For example, the reason why they chose to care, exercise self-control, be compassionate, seek after social justice, not be judgmental, walk with humility, honesty and integrity, were perceived to be connected to their personal meanings of spirituality. As such spirituality was perceived to contribute to their leadership styles, and make a difference when appropriately and consistently applied. The following quote from one of the teacher participants illustrates this perception.

*We're fortunate because he's [Steve] been able to establish a very strong leadership and I don't just mean him as 'the' leader, I mean everything under it, ... in which we're quite united ... and I have worked with principals who have been quite divisive but that unitedness is very important...*

Researcher: Would you believe that the desire to see a unity, which can become 'community,' comes from his spirituality?

*I think it does, yes ... it's from his inner beliefs of how he wants the world to be and he's taking the values of his home and how he wants his home to be and he's trying to create that community within his school... once again it's that being a good role model and walking the talk...and that's made a huge difference over the last few years (GT, teacher Abbey, 2:5).*

The findings showed that principals' personal meanings of spirituality were believed to contribute to professional leadership styles. The school context was relationally complex and challenging. Some variations were found between principal and teacher perceptions of the effect of spirituality in leadership practice. The final quote pertaining to this section expresses the passionate internalized feeling one of the principal's espoused for his staff and students. He

acknowledges that the test relational leadership in the midst of difficult situations.

*So I have a feeling, a passion and an intrinsic feeling for teachers and they do a crucial job and it's my job to support them. (BS, principal, 2:1).*

*Often teachers have really appreciated this support that I've given them. Or that the team around us have given as well. And during those times of need you know that's where the test is on if you really mean what you say about 'we care', it not only about we care for kids but we care for staff as well...And, a quiet heart to heart, just saying you're there for them (BS, principal, 2:5).*

### *Resilience*

In these findings resilience is understood as the psychological and physiological ability to absorb and cope with workplace stress and challenges, as well as sustaining positivity and competence under pressure. Resilience implies the ability to recover or spring back to a place of equilibrium and well-being. Principal participants believed the integration of their personal meanings of spirituality in educational leadership contributed to their resilience in a variety of ways. Spirituality was perceived as helpful to sustaining mental, emotional and physical equilibrium or buoyancy in the workplace. For example, spirituality was believed by some of the principals to provide them with alternative resource when faced with significant challenges which were believed to be beyond their ability to cope with. The following quote describes how one principal applied his sense of spirituality in a way that was believed to help him unburden his mind, and regain energy and perspective.

*Because there may be things that are out of your control that you can't or you don't feel that you can achieve or you feel with all the input you're not achieving; you say, 'LORD I've tried all these things and we still have this child who has behavioural issues, special needs issues, I need your input in here, and I give it to you, because I can't do it in my power' ...*

*And when you're with principals, in particular the surveys they've been doing of principals and so on, the burn out, the stress that is being faced by principals, and by teachers and by a large number of people in this society that you need to have that source of, that you can regain your energy and perspective (GT, principal 2;2).*

One common finding among the three principals was the belief that the integration of their spirituality perspectives helped them *sustain positivity* in the challenging and stressful role of principal leadership, by providing inner strength and a strong sense of purpose. For example, spirituality was believed to help them have a hope for the future, to see the potential in children, and to have a positive disposition in the face of significant educational and social challenges.

One principal, whose school context was particularly challenging, never spoke negatively about the problems he faced, but always maintained a constructive positive stance. In fact one of the teacher participants from his school affirmed this by saying that he knew his principal didn't like negative talk in the staffroom and this positivity modified this teacher's language in the staffroom environment. Such positivity emanated from this principal's spirituality, which was linked to the value of caring for others and a love of life. The application of his personal meanings of spirituality helped him avoid pessimistic thinking, as the following quote describes.

*In this particular school it's a cup half full rather than a cup half empty. And that's what we've always got to keep in front of them [the teaching staff] at the start we fill the cup (BS, principal, 2:4).*

Some of the principals in this study engaged in spiritual disciplines such as prayer, faith, reading of sacred text or sharing concerns with a trusted spiritual mentor, as a way to rebound from the pressures of the job. In the following quote, one of the principals describes his application of transcendent perspectives of spirituality into the process of maintaining resilience in professional leadership at the end of the day and when at home. Feeling refreshed and ready for the next day's new pressures are believed to be some of the tangible as tangible effects derived from integrating spirituality into professional leadership practice.

*It [spirituality] gives me strength at times when I'm wondering if I can continue ... it's not necessarily the world's way, that you would approach that with ... it's not necessarily what other people expect you to do...But from a Christian perspective ... I go home at the end of the day and sometimes I feel completely drained out but through prayer and being able to give these things to God I come back the next day afresh. And it all starts again and it doesn't matter the things I'm going through I'm able*

*to then come back with a fresh perspective again (GT, principal, 3:3).*

Another principal referred to her spirituality as the first of many resources she pulls on when faced with unexpected pressures in educational leadership. This finding shows that spirituality is regarded as significant but it does not provide all that's needed to maintain resilience. One of the teacher participants also perceived the contribution of spirituality to this principal's resilience.

*If I get under stress, a very stressful situation, and in my principal's job, there are things that happen very out of the blue that I'm not expecting that I need to pull on all my resources-well that's the first resource I pull. Which is 'O Lord, help me here, what do I do (YS, principal, 3:3).*

*She's not one to stand down students, she's inclined to go away and seek ... you know, God's meaning for their life. And to come back and refreshed and we give it another shot together (YS, teacher Georgette, 1:4).*

Several of the teacher participants perceived that spirituality in their principal's leadership was related to resilience. One teacher perceived that spirituality contributing to her principal's patience and considered judgment in dealing with difficult decisions. Healthy home life, happy personality, out of school activities, and self-control were some other ways that this teacher perceived spirituality to be linked with resilience. In the following quotes the teacher refers to her perception of the wholeness of the principal and that he had an aura about him.

*He celebrates different things.....not being negative... no, and you notice that right from his life, his family life and everything... what he does and what he belongs to...he's a whole person, ... 'cause it's always fascinated me, people that are you know, that I consider to be very religious, to me they have this 'aura' that they are such a happy, positive, you know person and I think he's got that (BS, teacher Debbie, 2:3).*

*I've seen him in there dealing with very irate parents... You've got to have some sort of spirituality to deal with situations like that, and to deal with them in the way that he does. I've never seen him get angry (BS, teacher, Debbie, 1:3).*

Through a different example, one of the principals described how his *value of a work-life balance*, helped him to remain on an even keel. Sustainability in

educational leadership for him was attributed to his spirituality informed beliefs about what his priorities should be and what he valued most, life not work. His statement ‘we don’t live to work but work to live’ illustrates how he wove his spirituality into the role of leadership with the goal of influencing other staff to adopt a similar approach. This principal was not advocating laziness or an attitude of work avoidance. Rather it was a perspective about making sure work didn’t consume his life and love of life.

*And now work life balance being even more to the forefront and you’ve got to model that as well so I was out fishing on Saturday with another couple of staff members and you know we had some fun as you do with that and ah those sort of things are really important that you model the life outside of teaching. Teaching’s important, school’s important but life’s more important. We don’t live to work we work to live (BS, principal, 2:6).*

The practical application of spirituality into professional practice did not guarantee resilience. However it was still perceived by the principals in be useful in the recovery process. One principal explained that two or three times a year, he would feel as though he didn’t have the resilience to bounce back. In another example one of the principals invited the support of trusted colleague as a practical way of assisting her to get through a difficult day at school when faced with unforeseen personal loss and grief.

*An example of her spirituality was when she asked for someone to pray for her in difficult times within this school environment. To pray to the God she wants to pray to... she has asked for that, believing that that will help her through the day (YS, teacher Georgette, 3:3).*

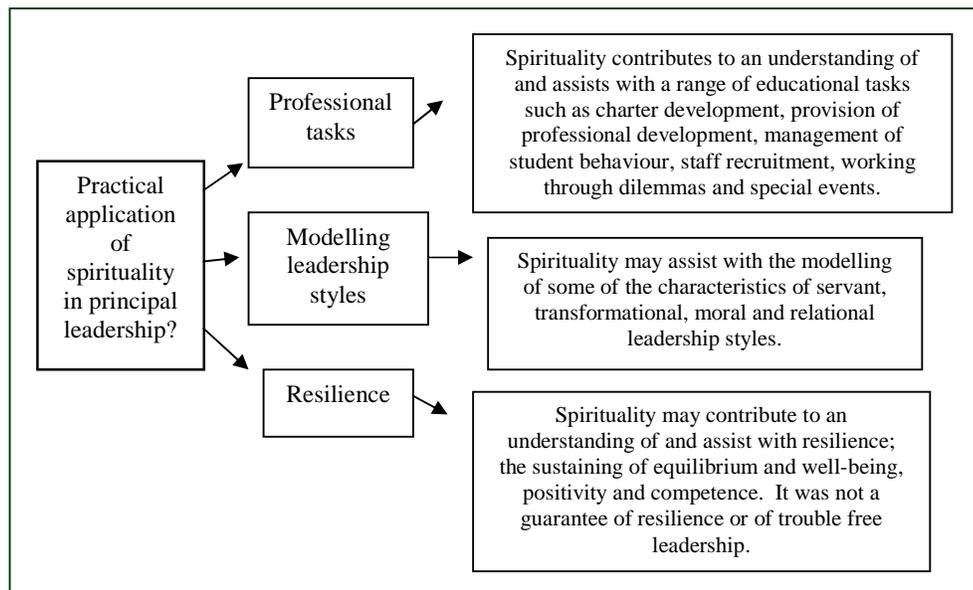
The principal concerned articulated her endeavour to maintain resilience under extra-ordinary and difficult personal and professional problems in her reflective journal. The following quote expresses something of the complexity of physical and psychological resilience in principal leadership. Spirituality is clearly integrated into the midst of the daily challenges, conflicts, fears and mental processing. However, under particularly difficult circumstances the process of maintaining professional resilience was not easy.

... challenging myself around what I want from this conflict situation and my worries and fears about any resolution,... as I walk it out in my day to day experiences and when I make my mind up to be positive, it helps. Working on not worrying about what others think about my principal-ship but finding my value as God's child. Easy to do when things are going well (YS, principal, RJ1)

**Summary**

The three principal participants believed their spirituality was able to be practically applied to their professional practice on a regular basis. They described how their personal perspectives of spirituality contributed to their engagement in a range of practical tasks, the modelling of their preferred leadership styles and in maintaining a sense of resilience in the job. Most of the teacher participants affirmed that their principals' spirituality was practically applied into various areas of their leadership.

Figure 6: Practical application of spirituality in principal leadership?



**Summary**

The findings in this chapter have focused on two research questions, ‘What might the phenomenon of spirituality mean to participants?’, and ‘What might spirituality in principal leadership mean to participants?’ They have been presented around two themes, making sense of life and making sense of living,

and woven threads and patterns of connections. Within the second theme three other sub-themes have been identified to explain the ways that personal meanings of spirituality were believed to be integrated into professional practice: Intrapersonal aspects of spirituality in principal leadership, influence of school context on spirituality in principal leadership, and practical application of spirituality in principal leadership.

The first main theme, 'Making sense of life and making sense of living', described participants' diverse and complex personal meanings of spirituality. These personal meanings provided a foundation to help make sense of spirituality in professional principal leadership. The second theme uses the metaphor of weaving to convey the sense of inter-connected threads of personal and professional meanings of spirituality. The principals and most of the teacher participants believed that spirituality in principal-ship was intentionally integrated, and filtered and fitted into school leadership practice. The findings also showed that contextual school factors help shape the praxis of spirituality in principal leadership. Professional standards for public school principals, school culture and traditions, values systems, and specific situations could encourage and challenge the principals' integration of spirituality in leadership. Practical tasks, modelling leadership styles and resilience were three sub-themes describing how participants believed spirituality as applied in school leadership. Overall, the findings showed that spirituality was perceived by all the principals and most of the teachers to make a contribution to school leadership.

Spirituality was believed by participants to be linked with their beliefs, values, attitudes, reflective thinking, passion, motivation, and a range of professional behaviours. It may be consciously and unconsciously present in their life-world as educational leaders. The findings showed that spirituality was described as *complementary* to the principals' leadership experience and professional skills. In the next chapter, I present the findings relating to the third and fourth research questions. These questions focus on the means by which spirituality in principal leadership might be influential and the perceived influence of spirituality in principal leadership on teachers and their teaching.

## CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS (PART TWO)

### The influence of spirituality in principal leadership

*I think that that whole compassion, empathy, manaakitanga (the practice of respect, kindness), looking after people, arohatanga (the practice of endearment, mercy), whanaungatanga (the practice of relationship, kinship), because Steve builds that... that's part of his spirituality...making people feel like you've got a family... (GT, teacher Claire, 3:5).*

#### Introduction

In the above quote one of the teacher participants describes her perception of the influence of her principal's spirituality in practice. The description is woven around Maori cultural terms and includes the perception that the principal's spirituality contributes to *building* manaakitanga, arohatanga and whanaunatanga into the life of the school, 'making people feel like you've got a family.'

The findings presented in this chapter provide an understanding of the means by which spirituality in principal leadership was believed by the teacher participants to be influential. The findings show that most of the teacher participants believed that appropriate expressions of spirituality in principal leadership could be influential when accompanied by integrity, quality care, and professional competence.

The chapter also presents a range of effects which teacher participants believed were attributable, at least in part, to the spirituality in their principal's leadership. While most of these effects were positive, some of the teachers were ambivalent about whether spirituality in principal leadership had affected their professional practice. There are also a few examples whereby spirituality in principal leadership was believed to have contributed some short-term negative effects on teachers. The findings affirm the individualised and subjective nature of influence and highlight the challenges some teachers had in apportioning influence to spirituality as an integral dimension of the person who leads.

## **Professional character, calibre, and conduct**

### ***Introduction***

This section of the findings relates to the research question, ‘By what means was spirituality in principal leadership influential?’ Five sub-themes have been identified which are integrity, quality care, professional competence, appropriateness, and multi-directional pathways. Although presented separately, the themes are inter-related. The findings showed that participants believed spirituality in principal leadership was influential through the exemplary character, calibre, and conduct of the leader, and not through the power of authority, inherent in the role. For example one principal explained his understanding by saying,

Researcher: How does spirituality help you as a principal to exercise leadership influence?

*There’s a good point, influence versus authority and something that we’ve just been recently discussing regarding behaviour management is that we want our teachers to be influential on our kids, the influence of learning rather than the authority figure... and that’s a style, that’s a personality culture all embraced there. And I often see it when dealing with difficult situations ... as principal you always have the authority thing but I try and not use that ... I try to use the power of influence (BS, principal, 3:4).*

### ***Personal and professional integrity***

The three principals described their awareness of the importance of having congruence between their espoused personal meanings of spirituality and the integration of spirituality into leadership practice. Integrity was understood by participants to be a virtue of effective leadership as well as a virtue of spirituality, similar in meaning to authenticity of character. The embodiment of beliefs and values was another way participants’ made sense of integrity. The following quote by a teacher shows this link between espoused beliefs and values, and behaviour. She also uses the phrase, ‘It’s got to be right through.’

*We would suss him out in a day if he had no integrity or he didn’t actually believe in what he was spouting... and if he said we*

*should do something while he did another... it's got to be right through... it's got to be a true part of yourself or don't do it (GT, teacher Bonny, 3:5).*

Participants described integrity as degree of alignment between leadership behaviour and the moral codes they believed were important. Self-evaluating the integrity of the integration of personal meanings of spirituality was a reflective activity for the principals and informed by feedback from others in the school community. They were aware that integrity was critical for effective leadership. The principals understood that their perception of their integrity might be imperfect and that teachers' perceptions might differ from their own assessment. People can have differing interpretations and expectations of situations and leadership behaviour. Most teacher-participants said they engaged in evaluating their principal's practice. Public scrutiny of principal leadership was an expected part of the role. The following quote shows another teacher's belief in the importance of integrity in principal leadership.

*If the principal isn't authentic in what he wants then it just shows through really, it's all just foam... People see through people, especially teachers, who are very much people-people anyway, so it's really important the principal's ... ideals, and so on and their integrity, is what drives their authenticity... integrity is kind of their beliefs and so that can help them to be honest (GT, teacher Abbey, 3:5).*

The findings showed that participants believed integrity to be a significant means by which spirituality in principalship might be perceived and received. That is, if spirituality was to be influential as an integral dimension of leadership there needed to be a high level of integrity. Integrity was identified by teacher participants as a common means by which they became aware of spirituality and viewed it in a positive light. In the next quote one of the principal's explains her understanding of the pivotal role integrity played in terms of her leadership influence. Integrity is linked to open honest relationships.

*I've got to have integrity in everything I do, so when I am asking people to do things, my word actually counts, because all the other things I've done have counted. If they don't see me bending the rules or lying, like if I'm expecting them not to lie, then I shouldn't be lying... if I submit the putting in claims for things I'm not owed or whatever I shouldn't be saying to them, 'well we*

*won't tell the parents about this, parents don't need to know this.' You know, because what they'll say is well it's OK to keep things from you (YS, principal, 3:4).*

Several teacher participants explained that their assessment of the integrity of their principal's spirituality in leadership was built up over time. Integrity was affirmed through experiencing a shared history with the principal in the life of the school. Integrity took time to build but could be broken down quickly by inconsistency in care, decisions or conversations. This aspect of relational integrity in principal leadership was believed to be a requisite for initiating and managing institutional change. The quote below expresses a teacher participant's belief that authenticity (which is very similar to integrity) needs to permeate all of the principal's practice including his/her espoused spirituality.

*Totally agree with the authenticity, and I think not just 'boxed' authenticity when you're talking about your spirituality but it comes through in your budget, it comes through in your curriculum it comes through in everything else... not just when I'm talking about spiritual things or attitudes but it's authentic all through everything that you do... the way you talk to the office person, the way you deal with the builder on site, the way you laugh when someone says a joke...it takes time (YS, teacher Iris, 3:5).*

The findings showed that spirituality in principal leadership, if it was to be considered, respected and effective in influencing teachers, must be accompanied by a deep level of professional integrity. Most of the teachers explained that they would be unimpressed by a leader who was demonstrably hypercritical. This didn't mean however, that teachers expected faultless leadership from their principals. But they did expect integrity would be demonstrated in the way principals responded to their mistakes. The next quote affirms this understanding of integrity in one of the principal's practice.

*It's not saying he wouldn't have his faults or off days and things ... but when he would he would be honest and he'd be, totally, he'd take it on and say OK I stuffed up or something, apologies, I was feeling out of character at that time (BS, teacher Edward, 3:5).*

### *Quality care*

All of the teachers and principals identified quality, interpersonal care as another requisite for spirituality in principal leadership to be influential. Being aware of people's need for care and the ability to respond appropriately in a timely fashion, were two aspects of care described by participants. Care was commonly acknowledged by participants as a descriptor of spirituality although not belonging exclusively to spirituality. Care was believed to help build relationships and relationships were considered vital in the daily busyness of school life. Principal care recognized teaching as a stressful and demanding role. In the following quote one of the principals describes his understanding of the important influential effects of care or the lack of it in principal leadership. His personal perspectives of spirituality are linked into his thinking.

*I think teachers have often commented about a principal they've had and that the principal in the time of crisis has assisted them. Or if they have seen the caring compassion towards a family or a child, they will see those outward signs and they're very important... .. And vice-versa if they see the principal showing the opposite they're very, very aware of those things too... any one can say words but when they see them actually, things being done by Christians to help people and so on, those are the sort of things they'll notice (GT, principal, 2:5).*

Teacher participants cited a wide range of ways that care was identified through their principals' leadership. Release-time for managing the school library, assistance with challenging students, professional development for new curriculum initiatives, and help with personal problems were some examples in the findings. Care was one indication that teachers felt valued by their principals. Some teachers justified their comments relating to the importance of workplace care by citing uncaring experiences they had encountered with principals with whom they had worked with in the past. The following quotation shows one teacher's perception of a link between care of *students*, and the integration of personal meanings of spirituality in principal leadership. The teacher also links uncompromising personal beliefs with professional expectations of staff.

*Our principal is open about the fact that she's a Christian and that her life is a daily walk with God. She was employed with us knowing that, so there was nothing hidden there. When she deals*

*with us as a staff she has a high level of expectation of integrity and that whole nurturing, caring of the students with whom we come into contact. Her spirituality is not compromised in the sense of she sticks with exactly what she believes and yes I guess the standards that she sets are a great model to other staff and to the children (YS, teacher Georgette, 1:3).*

Care was another way teacher participants evaluated the integrity of their principals and derived a sense of respect and receptivity towards their leadership. From the principals' perspective, care was identified as making a tangible contribution towards the culture and climate of the school community. Care was identified as an important means by which spirituality in principal leadership was perceived to be influential on teachers. The following two quotes are important because the teacher links six attributes of her principal's character and conduct with his spirituality. In the quotes below the principal's understanding of the importance of integrating care, compassion and love into his leadership is acknowledged by the one of the teacher's at the same school.

*The part that will... have an effect on them [the teachers] or possible effect on them and their life will be what they see of you as a person. And that's the most long term, critical part that I believe that people will take [from your leadership] ... that part of your personality of that compassion and caring, and loving and that side (GT, principal, 3:4).*

*I think that yeah that whole compassion, empathy, manaakitanga [caring for each other], looking after people, arohatanga [endearment, mercy], whanaungatanga [kinship, inter-relationships] because Steve builds that... that's part of his spirituality...making people feel like you've got a family...(GT, teacher Claire, 3:5).*

### ***Professional competence***

Competence implies having the ability to effectively do something. In terms of influence in principal leadership, professional competence sustained over time was believed to contribute to a sense of credibility. Credibility was believed to help teacher participants trust in their respective principals because they'd seen them successfully lead in a range of contexts. The principals perceived any weaknesses in their professional competence would be likely to produce a sense of diminished credibility and influence in the school organisation.

During the data gathering phases I perceived there was a correlation between participants' sense of effective leadership and the identification of positive influences attributed to spirituality. Conversely, where teachers expressed concern over some aspect of principal leadership there was a corresponding concern or question mark over the principal's spirituality in that role. This finding showed that without competent leadership, influence would suffer, including influence attributed to spirituality. The teacher's comments in the following quote identify a range of skills in her principal's leadership and the perceived effects they were having on staff and students. In this case the teacher linked the competent demonstration of these skills and effects with the principal's integration of spirituality into his practice.

*So by valuing the teachers that immediately helps. With teacher-aides he's very flexible with them if there's an emergency or if they have to take a child for an appointment then we'll work in together and make the hours up so they can go. So, with the children they just love him, because although he has to talk to them [in the context of behaviour], they don't actually mind being talked to. He's out there at lunchtime he's around in the playground, he's very visible and approachable (GT, teacher Abbey, 1:3).*

This link in the findings between competence and the influence attributed to spirituality in leadership was consistent with the earlier finding of the integral nature of spirituality. The finding also showed that the integration of personal meanings of spirituality could be complementary to principal leadership. Principals needed to be skilled practitioners, able to provide effective educational and administrative leadership of the school community. Spirituality when integrated into this quality of leadership was more readily perceived and received, thereby contributing to affect others in the organisation. The next quote describes a principal's understanding of the foundational importance of competence in professional practice.

*When teachers look at you, some of those things like your expertise, those signs they will definitely see and if you're weak in those particular parts they will be critical of that. If you can't organise, or you can't help lead the people they'll be critical of that. And that's a 'gimme' [or a 'given,' a requisite] you*

*basically have to be reasonably strong in those (GT, principal, 3:4).*

At the commencement of this study all three principals described a personal sense of confidence and credibility in their leadership roles. This was affirmed by the teacher participants. Later in the data gathering process, due to two significant and unforeseen events, one principal did experience difficulties. These events and ensuing challenges affected the way teacher participants began to perceive their principal's credibility *and* spirituality. This difficult time showed that spirituality and effective school leadership were deeply connected to this principal's general well-being. The integration of personal meanings of spirituality was believed by the principal to be beneficial at a personal level, helping her to process issues and cope with the stress and emotions of what was going on. However, the difficulties did affect the principal's ability to consistently express spirituality in appropriate ways and sustain the demands of the leadership role.

### ***Appropriateness of spirituality***

All three principals described an awareness to be non-partisan and inclusive in their leadership. The principals described their sense of professional duty to critically reflect on their integration of personal meanings of spirituality to ensure it was appropriate to their public school workplace contexts. . This aspect of the praxis of spirituality in principal leadership meant that it was incumbent on the principals to maintain a self-managed state of balance between what they believe personally and what they allowed into their professional lives.

When teacher participants perceived the spirituality in their principal's leadership to be appropriate to a particular context in the life of the school, then spirituality was likely to be influential. If not expressed appropriately, spirituality in principal was understood by all participants to potentially lead to relational problems, even conflict. Therefore perceiving appropriate expressions of spirituality in principal leadership was vital in terms of teachers being influenced by it. In the following quote a teacher reflects of the need for appropriate expression of spirituality in principalship

Researcher: ...because it [*spirituality in principal leadership*] would not be helpful to building a community...?  
*That's right, that's what I mean... if it's something I agree with which are all those positive virtues and values, self-esteem building, co-operation and those sorts of ones....absolutely. But if it's something that I ...goes against my values I guess... I wouldn't want to see it (YS, teacher Iris, 3:1).*

Principals endeavoured to derive this sense of appropriateness through a range of ways. They talked about drawing on previous experiences, listening to feedback from colleagues, parents, and external review reports. They mentioned research literature and examples of behaviour from the Bible as sources of help to guide their behaviour. They also described how they learnt through trial and error.

There were many endorsements of appropriate expressions of spirituality that suggested spirituality could complement the principals' leadership. There were a few examples cited by participants when expressions of spirituality or behaviours perceived to be linked to spirituality had drawn some criticism or censure. Some of the teacher participants indicated that other teachers on their staff were tolerant toward their principal. This meant that some expressions of spirituality might be tolerated by teachers but not necessarily accepted. Understanding the subtle difference between tolerance and acceptance was not always straight forward for all the principals in this study. The next quote acknowledges the religio-spirituality perspectives of the principal by one of the teacher participants. The principal's personal meaning of spirituality integrated into his practice is favourably received because of the appropriateness of the behaviour associated with it.

*There's quite a lot that comes through say with the principal and his wife they're very Christian people and they live it... I'd say they're caring, but they're more than caring, the comments they make, they believe in ... they're not just thinking about themselves they're thinking about the wider effect of what they do, the holistic they look at children holistically and that they care about the whole child's emotional health as well as their physical and that they're concerned for their home-life and how that affects them and to me that seems to say to me that they're spiritual (GT, teacher Bonny, 1:2).*

Some teachers viewed appropriateness in terms of their perception of the contribution spirituality in principal leadership was making to the well-being of

the culture of the school. In a few cases, teachers' views on appropriateness reflected a bias, depending on the degree of *compatibility* or *commonality* between a teacher's perspective of spirituality and that of the principal. Some teacher participants noted appropriateness of spirituality in terms of their principal's relational dealings with them personally. The first quote below shows a teacher's perception of the common ground between himself and the school principal. This was evaluated as important and appropriate to the context of the Maori immersion unit at the school. The second quote expresses another teacher's concerns that spirituality in principal leadership be appropriate to her own personal meanings of spirituality. The finding indicates that spirituality in principalship needs to be appropriate institutionally, culturally and individually to be influential.

*I think if she didn't share the ideas that we share together with this whanau system, I think we'd be rubbing noses pretty quickly, [reference to traditional Maori cultural greeting called, te hongi], but she does. And this is what I find and she's encouraging and she backs up the curriculum and backs up whatever we've got (YS, teacher Hemi, 1:3).*

*Well I do have reservations from the point of view that some people have, can have a hidden agenda and if a person has deep spiritual roots that are not in keeping with my personal belief then I would prefer them to be more surface with their 'good person stuff' (YS, teacher, Georgette, 3;1).*

Appropriateness of spirituality as a means of influence was therefore situated and subjective. Appropriateness was also shaped by professional standards and ethical guidelines for principal leadership. Where the behavioural expressions of spirituality in principal leadership remained within acceptable boundaries for the school setting and particular audiences, it could be a means leadership influence. Likewise, inappropriate expressions of spirituality could impede influence and even lead to negative effects on staff. Examples of these various influences of spirituality in principal leadership will be explained in the final section of this chapter.

### ***Multi-directional pathways of influence***

Integrity, quality care, competence and appropriateness were perceived as important means by which participants were influenced by spirituality in principal leadership. The findings also showed that spirituality in principal leadership was experienced by teacher participants in different directional ways. The indirect ways by which spirituality was believed to be influential were often subtle and mediated through everything the principals did, as the following quote shows.

*Whereas, specifically trying to go out and express your spirituality to teachers can make it a false situation and so therefore it's counter-productive to what you might want to do. I think it more as my spirituality affects how I relate in everything that I do (GT, principal, 3:2).*

Spirituality was also believed by participants to be mediated through principal leadership in the culture and climate of the school, principal decision making, and the provision of professional support for teachers. The following quote shows how one principal believed his spirituality in principal leadership was indirectly influential on the teachers and their teaching. He wanted to protect the teachers from unnecessary things and ensure that their focus was on the heart and soul of their students.

*One, I try and protect teachers from the other stuff that's out there and when I say that, the unnecessary bureaucratic stuff and I'm very much aware of disruptions that union matters or curriculum change, politicians sticking their nose in ...but what is actually important for our kids? ...  
...Keeping in mind that we are actually aiming for the heart and soul, not for some immeasurable task that is superficial, and being led down the assessment track. Show me the data, well, as I've said to you before, the most important things can't be measured, ...and we're talking about the heart and soul of the kid and that's okay (BS, principal, 1:4).*

One of the principals described how there were times when he redirected his leadership influence through other more appropriate staff, or to experts outside of the institution. Some of the principals and one of the teachers believed that influence of spirituality might be indirectly conveyed through

the agency of prayer and providence. The following quotes shows how one principal, believed his personal meanings of spirituality were indirectly influential.

*One of the important things is to continually remember that it's not you [i.e. school effects are not only due to the influence of the principal], and you've got to be grounded in it...and thank God for the things that are happening. It is very easy ...to start thinking that you are actually doing it all... and you're not. You may be a channel for those things but, I know that a lot of the things are not because I'm number one, I may be a part influence in it but it's far greater than the part influence that I might have had (GT, principal, 1:7).*

Some of the findings showed that spirituality could be more directly experienced by teachers through specific conversations or when working alongside the principal to resolve difficult issues such as a student's behaviour. Some of the direct conversational experiences described by participants included professional and private discussions in the principal's office, sharing together at a camp or professional conference, and informal chats in the staffroom. The following quote shows one teacher's perception of this more direct means of influence.

*It's really good to have a one-on-one conversation with him, really good... As long as he's listening and he's looking, make sure he's looking you in the eyes and he's listening... And actually seeing him teach and instruct, I see him [as] a really good teacher (BS, teacher Edward, 1:5).*

The principal participants linked direct influence of spirituality when they *modelled* virtues of love, care and respect directly through their leadership to teachers. The findings also showed that sometimes, where appropriate, spirituality could be directly experienced at a more religious or transcendent level. The following quote illustrates an incident of this nature.

*But she will offer to pray for you quite openly if you're meeting, if you're meeting privately with her about an issue in the school, or with you in your life. She will always say would you like me to pray about that with you...yeah I've found that helpful (YS, teacher Georgette, 1:3).*

There were findings that showed some participants perceived that there was an interplay or reciprocal exchange of spirituality between themselves as teachers and their principals. Reciprocity of influence between principals and teachers in this case study is understood around the interactive and collaborative opportunities that arise in school contexts such as dealing with staff, student and parent problems, and in planning ahead for the school term. In this sense not only was the spirituality of the principal present but the spirituality of the teacher participant might also be of influence on the principal's thinking, spirituality and subsequent leadership decisions. The next quote shows how a principal's spirituality integrated into his practice of professional care was understood in the context of 'us' not me. He relied on other staff to assist in notifying him of staff needs and in assisting with the outworking of his leadership policy of care.

*You know, with staff there's a whole range of personal issues and problems that they bring to the job at various times and you've got to address that and I rely on my other staff to let me know and we just make sure that there's an appropriate person to talk with or support and if it's a grizzle address it rather than let it simmer. If it's a stress situation, how we can help to address it and again making sure that people are aware that we are doing all the best we can to care about our staff and that's very important (BS, principal 1:4).*

Direct and reciprocal influence attributed to spirituality in principal leadership was linked to the nature of the issues discussed, the decisions made and in the responsive ways that the principals listened, processed problems and responded in caring and professional ways. For example, participants were able to describe times when their specific feedback to their principals had led to modification of professional development initiatives, fund-raising plans, and styles of leadership communication. In other situations, teachers said they were the one's to initiate discussion about issues they were concerned about, which then invited or required a principal leadership response. For example, a teacher desired to provide greater school support for new parents so she discussed her ideas with her principal which in turn led to the development of a programme which helped to build a more relationally connected school community.

There were times when this reciprocity between teacher participants and principals could be more overtly inclusive of spirituality perspectives. For

example in certain cases where there was a shared spirituality perspective between a principal and a teacher, spirituality could be more openly discussed. One poignant example of this was a principal and teacher who both prayed about a way forward relating to a particularly problematic and needy student. The data suggested that spirituality in these reciprocal processes appeared to be linked to the professional rapport between the principals and teachers and the commonality they shared with their spirituality perspectives. The following quote shows this sense of the reciprocal influence between one of the teacher participants who was also in senior management and her principal.

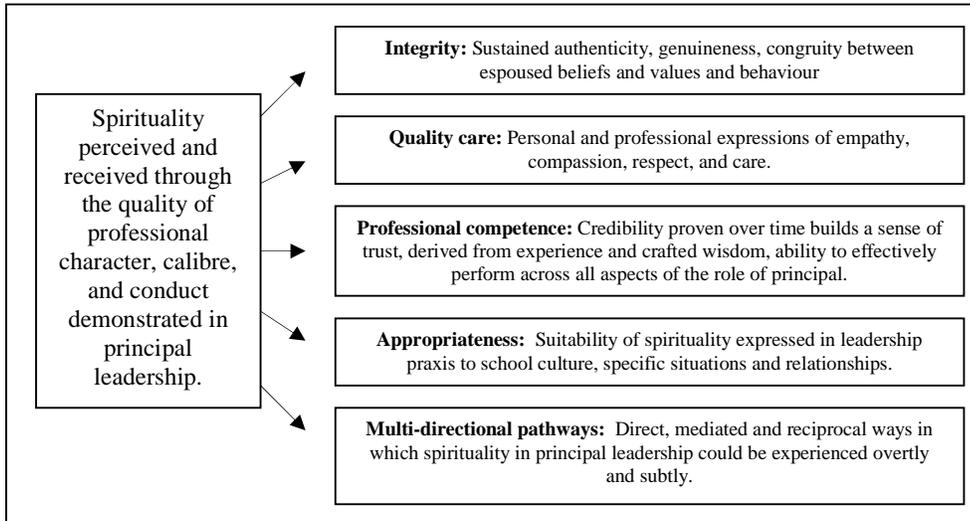
*But he's trustworthy, you know that what he says he really means. I mean I have a tremendous relationship with him. We're very fortunate probably, it's quite a rarity I would think, because in many ways he's really become quite a confidant for me and vice versa (GT, teacher Abbey, 1:3).*

### **Summary**

The five sub-themes presented in this section of the findings address the overarching research question, 'By what *means* was spirituality in principal leadership perceived to be influential?' The findings showed that participants' perceptions and receptivity towards spirituality in principal leadership were linked to integrity, quality care, and competence. Spirituality was also perceived to be influential when experienced in appropriate professional ways suitable for the public school context. Commonality of spirituality perspectives and the quality of relationships between the principals and teachers was closely associated with these means of influence.

Participants also described three directional ways that spirituality in principal leadership was believed to be experienced, these being direct, indirect and reciprocal ways both overtly and subtly. The use of power and authority are inherent in principal leadership. However, the imposition of power over teachers was not found to be a means by which spirituality was perceived as influential. Overall the findings showed that the means by which spirituality was perceived by participants to be influential were complex, often subtle, reflecting the character and professional skill of the leader and the situational context at hand.

Figure 7: By what *means* might spirituality in principal leadership be influential?



## Variable influence of spirituality in principal leadership

### *Introduction*

In this final section of the chapter I present the findings relating to the fourth research question, ‘What influence might spirituality in principal leadership have on teachers and their teaching?’ Influence in this context refers to any perceived or tangible effect, whether partly or wholly attributed to a principal’s integration of personal meanings of spirituality into their professional practice. All three principals were able to describe their intention to influence teachers and their teaching through their leadership, of which spirituality was an integral part.

Teacher participants’ ability to identify and describe influence which they believed to be attributed to their principal’s spirituality was less straight forward. It required them to reflect on and evaluate their experience of life at their school, their principal’s leadership, and their own teaching practice. It required them to try and evaluate what influence if any their principal had had on them and what proportion of that influence might be due to spirituality.

The findings showed that teacher participants described a range of influential effects which they believed were related to their principal’s spirituality in leadership. Respected and effective principal leadership was linked with

positive effects being attributed to spirituality in that leadership. Some of the teachers while acknowledging the influence of their principal's leadership were unsure or ambivalent about attributing influential effects to their principal's spirituality. There were a few findings that showed some teachers describing negative feelings and effects linked to mistakes or problems in principal leadership, of which spirituality was perceived as an integral part.

This connection between the influential effects of spirituality and the professional skills of principal leadership are described in the following quote. The teacher participant reflects on the influence of the spirituality of a previous principal, *not* associated with this research. She describes the incongruence between this principal's personal meanings of spirituality and their integration into professional practice. The negative influence of this principal's spirituality is closely aligned to ineffective professional skills.

*Because the previous principal had professed to be a very good Christian but was a very poor leader... he was quite self-centred and had no empathy or understanding of people really, which is sad (GT, teacher Abbey, 2:3).*

Spirituality in principal leadership was perceived by participants in this case study as an interdependent, complex dimension to leadership and not an easily isolated independent variable. The following quotes, from one of the principals and teachers, illustrate this integrated complex nature of the phenomenon, while at the same time affirming its influential presence, and subtle effects on people.

Researcher: ...do you think they [the teachers] would readily attribute certain aspects of your role to spirituality or might they attribute it to something else?

*Whether or not they call it spirituality, I mean they probably wouldn't, they might do that in a different sort of terminology, I mean it's things like being there for them, being very highly visible in this school to supporting them in their work as teachers (BS, Principal, 3:6).*

Researcher: ...would it be your perception that as you think about the spirituality of Murray in his role in principal leadership, that spirituality in his life in his leadership role here is significant?

*I think it would be quite significant in his life. It would be quite a strong part of who he is.*

Researcher: And is it significant here in this school?

*You don't really, it's there... it's not really sort of, he's not waving his hand saying I'm doing this now, sort of guys, it's just there it's always... when he comes in the playground, walks in the playground, so I can just feel the way the kids, the whole thing changes when he comes out, they all see him as a figure, the big figure coming out ... when he speaks we all listen, we really want to hear what he's got to say as well. I see kids change the way they're acting not 'cause they idolise him, but to show respect for who he is (BS, teacher Edward, 1:5).*

The findings of the influence of spirituality in principal leadership are presented within three themes, positive feelings and practical effects, ambivalence and uncertainty, limiting or restricting effects.

### ***Positive feelings and practical effects***

In the following section a range of examples of positive influences are described by the teachers from the three school sites. The examples reflect the research design which was focused on individual interviews and the meanings of spirituality on teachers individually. Spirituality also was communicated in ways unique to each principal, and meant different things to different teachers. The findings are categorized into four themes: Improved morale, professionalism and school culture, enhanced self-efficacy, increased awareness of and practice of care, and expanded approaches to management and increased self-control.

#### ***Improved morale, professionalism and school culture***

The first example of influence on the morale and culture of the school is provided by an experienced teacher participant. She bases her judgment on intuition, or an instinctive sense of knowing. The significance of having a spiritual base is that it is accredited with providing the school with its foundation. In the context of the interview, the term 'spiritual base' was not limited to or meant to be synonymous with the principal's spirituality. Rather it had a broader meaning, recognizing the importance of spirituality within the life of the school community of which the principal's spirituality was an

acknowledged and important part. Another finding from this teacher's comment is that she recognizes spirituality is not the exclusive reason for the school's greatness rather it is one of several contributing and interdependent factors. This understanding illustrates indirect influence of spirituality in principal leadership at this public school site, through its *contribution* to the overall success and reputation of the school culture and community.

*My intuition is that having that spiritual base is one of the things that make our school really great, and that's why I see it as the foundation I suppose. That's underpinning their learning really. The way he treats people, the way he shows tolerance and respect, and the way he manages...*

*Also probably in the way that he has, I've seen a big change from when I first got here which when I first got here Steve had just started as well and I've seen a big change in the culture of our school which on reflection I can see what he's done to bring that change about (GT, teacher Claire, 1:2).*

This perception of the influence of spirituality in principal leadership was affirmed by another teacher at the same school. In the quote below this teacher identifies her own spirituality perspective and makes some evaluative remarks based on her experience. This teacher acknowledges that spirituality contributes towards the depth and *soul* of the school. Then, from a parent perspective, she backs up her comments by saying a school lacking these elements would not be one that she would want her children to attend. These findings show that some of the teacher participants believed spirituality could make a tangible contribution to the morale and behaviour in the school.

*Yeah, there's a good feeling here. I've worked in a school where it was lacking and it was the school's philosophy to cut 'it' [spirituality] out. And it was terrible, it was a place 'lacking soul,' so I know what it's like to work in a place without it even though I'm not a practising Christian myself, I really noticed the lack of it. It was weird because to have a place like that, there was no depth to the place. So I know what it's like when it's not there and I would never let my children ... I would not be keen for my children to go to a school like that (GT, teacher Bonny, 1:2).*

Spirituality in principal leadership also contributed to a teacher's sense of collective pride within the school. In the following quotes, the teacher compares and contrasts the current principal with a previous one. He then contrasts this

spirituality with the current principal's integrity; his beliefs, words, and actions. This teacher's sense of confidence in his principal's integrity influenced him affectively. His sense of pride was not limited to him alone, but that he perceived it was widespread among the staff. In this example there is a further link between spirituality in principal leadership and teacher morale.

*From the last principal there was a vacant 'spirit' almost, um not there, um he let the community down...[In reference to the current principal] You can see it in the way he speaks and what he says probably comes from his spirituality, his background of what he, how he wants to educate... he puts into action what he says. He stands up for our school and in other places and makes us feel very proud of who we are as a school knowing that he's got our back and our front covered (BS, teacher Edward, 1:3).*

Positive emotional and practical effects attributed to spirituality in principal leadership were sometimes described as minor and sometimes described as more significant. In the following quote one of the teachers acknowledges she has become a *much better* teacher. Her perception is explained by comparing her current principal with a less influential former principal. There is an implicit link to spirituality, through the references to the current principal's support, expectations and positivity. Moreover, the phrase 'it's just everything' highlights the complexity of apportioning influence to spirituality which is an integrated dimension of the leader.

*Well looking back on the two eras, the two principals, I would say that I'm a much better teacher because of the influence he's had on me (current principal), not just the professional development that is thrown at us but the way I suppose it is... It's just everything, the expectation that the children should have all the equipment that's necessary and you know we'll find a way of getting it. Again for the very best for the children (BS, teacher Debbie, 1:5).*

The findings also revealed a couple of teachers who at previous schools had experienced either a lack of spirituality in their principal's leadership or disparaging comments from their principal towards discussions relating to spirituality. This had resulted in some anxiety about allowing their own spirituality to 'surface' in them as teachers at their current schools. However, the example of their current principals had helped them to be more open, and

holistic (acknowledging the spiritual dimension to life), while at the same time respecting appropriate professional boundaries within their public school settings. For these teachers the spirituality modelled by the principal in leadership was perceived as giving them permission to be more authentic and open in how they presented themselves to their students. It allowed them to adjust their filtering and fitting of their own spirituality to be more genuine in the school context. The following excerpts are from an interview with a teacher who had a Maori cultural and religious spirituality perspective. They are based on previous and current, critical reflections of principal leadership.

*I've worked with a principal who had the scientific belief and I didn't feel comfortable discussing certain things, not like religion or God or spirituality with him, but I found him hard to approach because I felt we came from different backgrounds, um whereas ...when I know where a leader comes from, has a spiritual system, belief system, then we're going to have a bit more common ground and it's like...*

*I feel really happy because I had to do a lot of soul searching with my belief systems but at the same time, I don't, I'm not going to validate that to someone who doesn't like or is questioning, 'Oh how can you believe that?' and poo-hooing it ... whereas with someone else I can just be able to express myself.*

*I think it's given me that permission to feel that it's [spirituality] OK. Because like I said at a previous school I felt you almost had to put that barrier up (GT, teacher Claire, 1:4).*

Researcher: So does that permission enable you to be more true to who Claire is?

*Yeah, I think so...Yeah and I think that kids are really, really perceptive at knowing when you're giving them the line as well and knowing when you are letting them see who you really are (GT, teacher Claire, 1:3).*

At a different school, another teacher attributed a similar effect to her principal's spirituality. The principal's integration of her spirituality in professionally appropriate ways encouraged this teacher to be more authentic with the way she lived out her role as a teacher at the school.

*Well the biggest thing I think is that she... working alongside her encouraged to me to be more bold about what I believe... it seems to me that she is a person who shares freely about her faith within the staffroom if she needs to, and with me, and so I feel that it*

*seems to such a natural part of her life, that it's like been an example to me to make it more of a natural part of my life...yeah it's like I can be a little more out there about it... the good times and the bad that's what I'm talking about (YS, teacher Georgette, 1:4).*

Spirituality in principal leadership was therefore perceived to contribute to this teacher's sense of emotional well-being and sense of freedom in expressing herself. This was attributed to this teacher perceiving a greater sense of common ground with her current principal through the knowledge that he has a similar belief system. This effect was not due to the teacher and the principal sharing the same belief system, but rather because they shared a common value of *there being a spiritual dimension to life*. The result of which was a heightened sense of happiness at being able to express her belief system without fear, ridicule or the need to validate her point of view. This finding also links spirituality with relationship building between principal and the teacher.

In this next finding, from a different school, a more explicit reference to the principal's spirituality is made in the context of leadership influence. The teacher connects her perception of the principal's spirituality with her professional words and actions, and in particular high expectations that are backed up with professional development support. This influence is described as both personal and institutional, contributing towards increased professional commitment and performance by the teachers at the school.

*I believe that she values children and I believe due to her Christian beliefs she believes in wanting the best for all people and for people to reach their potential, you know and that everybody has great skills and everything. So therefore she has been encouraging us as teachers to up our game, I guess; to give the best to these children. You know she really believes that these children deserve to be taught to the best of our ability so therefore she's very strongly into teacher development things like that. So I guess she's, we've had a lot of professional development that has been very positive (YS, teacher Iris, 1:4).*

Another teacher from this same school identified a link between the principal's spirituality and his motivation to do his best for her. In the quote below, this teacher describes a range of professional, relational behaviours in his principal,

and then makes the link to her religious spirituality perspective. This finding illustrates the influence of the integration of spirituality *in* principal-ship.

*It's just her continued support and encouragement. She's forever encouraging, there's never a dull moment, every time she seems to be smiling. You know when you get a nice good morning sent to you when you come through the door and you know it sort of makes your day. She's encouraging it doesn't matter what she does it's never discouraging.*

*I suppose it's very encouraging and it gives me that incentive to do the best I can for her. I have thoughts of my own on her. Sometimes I feel she's quite a religious person (YS, teacher Hemi, 1:4).*

Another tentative effect of spirituality in principal leadership was in building stronger collegial relationships with teachers through cultivating a sense of trust. This was explained by one of the teacher participants in terms of transcendent and social constructivist perspectives of spirituality. Another causal factor in this teacher's perception of trust was they shared some common understandings of spirituality. Her acknowledgement that she'd never really thought of the link to spirituality before was related to the novelty of this research topic within her secular school context. It also suggests the difficulty some participants had of attributing effects to spirituality with unequivocal certainty.

*I feel like there's a sense of trust as well that comes and maybe because of my life experiences to me trust is linked in with spirituality because that's to me the foundation of where it comes from. Like, like you are raised to believe that there is a higher being and you can place your trust in... so whether I link that to something that Steve and I have in common I never really thought of it as that... because that comes from that spiritual place if you like (GT, teacher Claire, 1:4).*

In the final quote relating to this section on morale and school climate, the spirituality informed values promoted by one of the principals were believed by a teacher participant to influence her employment retention. Implied in the quote below is the possibility that inappropriate or deficient expressions of spirituality might contribute to the opposite effect, to influencing some teachers to choose a teaching position at a different type of school.

Researcher: And therefore, you would say that it's a significant influence on you and the school here?

*Oh yes, yes it's got too... I mean watching him work, knowing his expectations, that comes from the top and you'll find the rest of the staff come on board with it...those that don't leave...so if they want to carry on, they admire these qualities, they will stay and work (BS, teacher Debbie, 2:5).*

#### *Enhanced self-efficacy*

In the following quote an experienced teacher describes the influence of her principal's spirituality. She identifies a change in her sense of self-empowerment resulting in the ability to be more authentic as a teacher and to create a teaching environment more consistent with who she is as a person. It suggests that spirituality in principal leadership both affirmed and encouraged already existing internalized teacher beliefs (not the imposition of the principal's beliefs) leading to an increased sense of self-efficacy and action in professional practice. It also links spirituality in principal leadership with influencing institutional climate which then indirectly led to influencing change in classroom climate. A key statement in this quote is the teacher's perception of 'living spirituality'. This quality of spirituality is identified as critical in terms of influence.

*It's [spirituality in principal leadership] given me lots more confidence to follow those beliefs I've always held really dear, and in my own classroom teaching, I always tried to establish those kinds of climates however in the past with principals that I've worked with previous to Steve and the one that I worked at in my last school, that didn't have the same underlying spirituality of 'living spirituality' there; I was never very comfortable, and you were never encouraged to do things (GT, teacher Abbey, 1:3-4).*

In this next example, another teacher acknowledges that her principal's spirituality in leadership has influenced her motivation to explore initiatives designed to strengthen relationships between parents and the school. Because this teacher knew and understood the principal's values and beliefs, and shared some commonality of 'heart', she felt far more confident that her initiatives would be well received and suitably resourced. This heightened sense of self-efficacy was significant in that the teacher felt empowered to engage in positive action that would further encourage the development of the school's culture.

*I can go to her [the principal] and I know that she'll be open to it [suggestions for building relationships between school and parents in the community], because she values community and values positive relationships and service to others and that sort of thing. So I know I'm more likely to come up with something, I'm more likely to give it a go suggesting something because she's got similar sort of heart (YS, teacher Iris, 1:3).*

#### *Increased awareness of and practice of care*

As the principal's modelled caring relational behaviour to staff and towards students, teachers were influenced to think and behave differently towards the children in their classes. Receiving care from the principals helped remove pressure, stress and guilt from them as well. The following quote shows one teacher's reflection on the influence of her current principal's spirituality in leadership.

*For example at my previous school my father died and my principal said I hope that you'll be back the day after tomorrow because of ...whatever. Now, afterwards I just should have said no but I just felt this weight of guilt on me that he imposed and I think that's something Steve never imposes, he actually allays any guilt on all teachers, he takes that away (GT, teacher Abbey, 1:3-4).*

Another teacher indicated that her principal's spirituality perspective had influenced her away from a curriculum-driven approach to teaching, to a more child-centred holistic approach. By listening to and seeing the way the principal cared for students she developed a respect towards the principal's leadership. This in turn helped her to change from an autocratic teaching style to a more relational one. The teacher also identifies the influence as 'direct', straight from what was modeled by the principal to affecting her as a teacher and in her teaching.

*If I've got respect towards my leaders ... then I follow the direction that they want the school to go in... so he has had a direct impact on my teaching because I'm much more relaxed about the academic side of it since coming here and I'm more focused on let's make sure all these children are balanced and come to school ready to learn and I don't beat myself up if I can't get my reading programme done in a day. That would never have happened before to this school.*

Researcher: So are you saying he's encouraged you to focus on children holistically not just the lessons (*yep*) but the learners behind the lessons?

*Yeah definitely. And that is the make up of the children as well. You have ... these children don't come to school ready to learn because they're not coming from environments where they have got happy or stable..., this is the most stable environment most of the time and so yeah so keeping it consistent, you know we do care about these children[it] comes from the top (BS, teacher Fiona, 1:4).*

This also teacher acknowledged that her change in teaching was attributed to her increased professional experience, illustrating the complexity and the difficulty in apportioning influence to spirituality. She also believed that if she were to teach under a principal with a different philosophy she would probably change again. 'But if I walked into a school tomorrow where that wasn't the values of the principal, I would change,' (BS, teacher Fiona, 1:4). To help explain her comments, this teacher revealed she came from a military background prior to teaching, and was pre-disposed to following leadership as a course of *duty*. In contrast though, another teacher from a different school said the exact opposite view. That if her principal was not modelling the educational values she deemed important, then she was adamant that she would continue to do what she believed was right for her students.

A different teacher participant who was also a member of her school's senior management team, identified spirituality in her principal's leadership as contributing to the way teachers taught at her school. This teacher was involved in mentoring staff, and had done so for a long time at her school. She identified the spirituality informed beliefs, values and actions of the principal as 'having a big impact'. The integration of spirituality in her principal's leadership was acknowledged as contributing to a change in teachers' attitudinal, emotional and behavioural dispositions towards students in their classes. She explained it this way,

Researcher: So it's the manner, the way in which the teacher works with the students is the key [*Yes*] and would you say that this emphasis or influence that he has links with his spirituality?

*Oh definitely.*

Researcher: In what way?

*He wants, he sees the need for everyone to be valued, and he sees that all people are valuable and he's extremely sympathetic to the needs of people. I've heard him remind teachers that you don't know what that child has to cope with at home... and those sorts of things and because of that teachers do not take things at face value as they might normally, it has had a big impact on it because they are more sympathetic and caring really toward the children in their class (GT, teacher Abbey, 1:5).*

This same teacher, during the final interview round perceived there was a domino effect from the principal's spirituality in leadership towards teachers, who then treated their students in a similar manner. The key term is 'they pass it on to the students.'

*One of the things that I think the staff here feel really supported about is that they are seen as people and allowances are made for their situations that happen ... because everyone has upsets in their lives and so because they're looked after and they feel valued and so they pass it on to the students... and as well as that the students are treated with respect by everyone (GT, teacher Abbey, 3:1).*

Another teacher from the same school context affirmed that her principal's espoused and modeled philosophy of education influenced her educational thinking, feelings and action towards her class. In the excerpt below she affirms the practice of being truthful and loving in the context of seeking professional assistance for several needy students. The depth of feeling emphasized here provides the basis from which care and compassion can flow. This depth of feeling was something experienced through her principal personally and by observation of his relational behaviour with students.

Researcher: So do you think there's an aspect in which he [the principal] encourages you to speak the truth in love?

*Yeah, definitely, because I had the parent in there and I said we love your boys because they had... many good qualities which I left out of the letter for that purpose to get the paediatrician to sit up and take notice. So I said I put the bad things in specifically to get help for you but we do love your children and they brighten up our day and all this sort of thing and that's his philosophy [the principal] that we have to feel really deeply for our classes (GT, teacher Bonny, 1:5).*

*Expanded approaches to management and increased self-control*

Most of the teacher participants acknowledged influence from spirituality in principal leadership when their principals modeled positive strategies for dealing with difficult and challenging students. In the next quote the teacher reflects on the impact her principal's caring approach on children has had on her. An important finding here is the change in mindset from immediately imposing consequences to seeking causes.

*I know that when I'm having to deal with problems with children, I'm far more willing to get on the phone and ring up, investigate, and ask more questions than just saying oh OK this child isn't behaving, these are the consequences, ... so first of all looking to 'why' (BS, teacher Debbie, 3:3)*

This same teacher acknowledged how her principal's modelling of self-control and care when dealing with difficult students helped her reflect on her management behaviour and pursue a course of greater self-control. This teacher also identified her principal's leadership as influential on how she viewed difficult children. By recognizing the broader socio-economic, spiritual and domestic circumstances contributing to anti-social behaviour, it helped her to respond in a more patient and restrained manner.

*I've learnt he's very good at teaching you how to handle these situations that can be quite difficult. When sometimes I think I could have thrown off at the handle but I just think back on how I see him dealing with them. And probably he has some effect on how I see these children. When you have your hard times with them and they're doing some dreadful things you know ... you find ways of dealing with it (BS, teacher Debbie, 1:4).*

In this school context, influence on teachers and their teaching was derived from what the principal referred to as *living* policies that didn't just state what was expected of teachers, but demonstrated through the professional life of the principal what could be accomplished. Influence on teachers in this way was derived through sustained, authentic leadership. Participants believed it was 'talk and walk' that built credibility with staff and impacted the way they thought and behaved. The teacher participants said they knew what was expected and they knew that there was support when needed. Furthermore, because the principal

maintained a high degree of positivity and did not model negative talk, because he handled stressful situations professionally and calmly, teachers were able to have confidence to practice management in a similar way.

When probed further a different teacher identified a change in her student behaviour management linked to the influence of her principal's leadership. Through adopting a more relational caring teaching style as promoted by the principal, she became less strict. She became more caring, trying to understand the children, and why they might be unsettled. At the end of the following quote the teacher identifies some cognitive dissonance between who she is as a person and the way she was teaching. Spirituality in principalship is attributed with helping to align the person who teachers with professional practice of teaching

Researcher: Do you manage kids differently?

*Yeah I do, I'm not so strict, I'm not so worried about the little things that disrupt you, the children's behaviour, and those things, I let more go. ...Um, it's very different, very caring and more child based... I never let a child hug me before I came to this school, I used to, which sounds terrible but that was a legal issue and I'm a very caring person but teaching is teaching (BS, teacher Fiona, 1:4).*

Spirituality in principal leadership also influenced another teacher by helping her think through dilemmas with behaviourally disturbed students in divergent ways. Rather than quickly applying punitive responses, the principal's desire to look for ways of keeping the student enrolled at the school and to transform behaviour, significantly impacted upon this teacher's thinking and action. In the next quote there is an acknowledgment of the principal's 'heart of kindness,' coupled with her collaborative and supportive leadership which are linked to her spirituality. The teacher identifies her spirituality as having a very strong effect on her teaching. The teacher also perceives a transcendent dimension to her principal's spirituality when she suggests, 'it goes beyond what we can do at times.

Researcher: As you've looked at her life [the principal] and you've worked alongside her talking and journeyed with her and seen her spirituality, can you think of a way it's kind of triggered something or shifted something?

*It has in the sense of looking outside the square when a student is extremely difficult... she is known to frequently to give that student a lot more lee way and care than principals I've known in the past. Umm, where some students would have been stood down from the school, she has worked with me and we have sought ways to keep the child enrolled at school and that to me is a very strong way that she has influenced me with her spirituality because she's basically going outside the school system to find a way and encouraged me...*

*But rather than that, giving the child time out up with her, and then we will go away individually and try to work out a way to keep that child. That has to come from the spiritual realm, from the heart of kindness. It goes beyond what we can do at times (YS, teacher Georgette, 1:4).*

One of the principal participants would re-tell to staff stories of successful transformations in children. By reminding the staff of the times when a real difference had been achieved in students' lives, this principal encouraged perseverance and hope in his teachers. This particular principal maintained a high level of positivity and emphasized that success was possible in spite of the challenges. This use of institutional success stories created a 'can do mentality,' which in turn influenced a teacher participant's mind set.

Researcher: So every child, irrespective of their circumstances or behaviour is considered precious?

*Oh yes, yes,... and he [the principal] expresses this too, you know he'll say gosh that child has really turned around... and there are a couple that have and he always comments on the fact that he has seen such an improvement in these children, so you know it is encouraging for you as a teacher to, I think, find, keep trying to find, ways to deal with them [difficult students] (BS, teacher Debbie, 2:3)*

Some of the findings showed that certain aspects of spirituality in principal leadership could be 'picked up' by teachers, and be assimilated into their own way of thinking, influencing their beliefs and values. For example one teacher said, 'I pick up, there's so much about communication that is not verbal, and I pick up his philosophy of life.' (GT, teacher Bonny, 1:4). It shows that influence from spirituality can come from observation of who a person is. The phrase philosophy of life was used to convey how the principal made sense of life. Picking up the principal's philosophy of life at school influenced this teacher's communication in her classroom with the children, and with other colleagues in

the staffroom. This influence was of a positive nature, promoting positive professional dialogue in a positive institutional environment, as the quote below testifies.

*...and I pick up his philosophy of life and so there will be things I wouldn't say to him in the classroom, in the staffroom that I know he wouldn't like me to discuss...so I think that his philosophy of life at school, you talk about professional subjects, you talk about the children, you can have a laugh and it's a good place but it's a positive place (GT, teacher Bonny, 1:4).*

Most teacher participants in this study indicated a strong understanding of their values and beliefs associated with education and life. However, the two youngest teachers suggested they were more open to being influenced by the values and behaviour modeled by their principal. In the following quotes, one of these teachers identifies this vulnerability while at the same time conceding his principal's leadership has helped him gain a more mature self-awareness of his role as a professional teacher.

*If I put it commonly, if my principal was more loose, I'd be more loose, I think... I'd be more, I don't know, I wouldn't be as aware of who I am and my place in the school and the community...*

Researcher: Could you give some examples of what you mean by 'loose'?

*Well his professional standard of where he sets himself... Like... if we were going out for staff drinks and [if] he'd be the person who has the most and we'd all carry on with him or if there was a sports event and he decided to turn up in shorts or a singlet I'd do the same sort of thing...But there's a, it's a sort of unwritten protocol that he shows...*

*But if there was no spirituality around the school, ...I don't know I wouldn't know how to initiate it myself, but I'd be concerned that there was none (BS, teacher Edward, 3:2)*

Unlike many of the participants in this study, this teacher recognised he would not be able to initiate spirituality around the school. In this specific example the spirituality of the principal's leadership was identified as being particularly influential in transforming this teacher. The transformation was voluntary involving the assimilating of the principal's values into his personal life and

professional practice. In this case there was a link between spirituality in principal leadership and teacher mentoring.

Researcher: ...has his spirituality in terms of his emphasis on virtues or caring, has that helped shape you in the way you engage with children in your class as the teacher?

*Yep, and out of the class... and in society. I used to be very different to what I am now.*

Researcher: Different in terms of?

*Sensibility [acute perception of something] and knowing what I want to do and knowing where I'm going in life and what I'm up to... And I used to go out quite a bit and sort of realised that that's affecting who I am in the classroom and so I cleaned my act up, got a hair cut and changed who I was and where I was living, 'cause I wasn't doing a fair justice to the children in my classroom. I was actually teaching more of my interests more than theirs... I might have had a rough night in town or something and I've come in here and the next day I've had a go at them and it's not their fault hmmm (BS, teacher Edward, 4:1).*

In this example, spirituality in principal leadership was also influential on the way a teacher spoke and acted within the principal's presence. The teacher said his principal, 'carries himself as a quite a spiritual figure in the school' and then went on to say, '... I'm sort of wary of what I say around him myself, the way I act...' (BS, teacher Edward, 1:2). These comments as conveyed in the interview were understood as an expression of respect and support for the principal's beliefs and values. It was a self-imposed and self-managed behavioural response to the influence of the principal who always endeavoured to model a positive school culture, focusing on the credits rather than the deficits of the student community. It was a respectful attempt to imitate what the principal did with staff. It was not conveyed to mean the principal didn't want staff to discuss any problems they were experiencing.

One teacher stated that her principal was '*good for her*' based on his spirituality informed values that were competently modelled in his leadership. Being 'good' for her included a psychological sense of well-being and also a practical influence on her teaching, shaping her thinking, her words, and her approaches to managing behaviourally problematic children. In her statement below there is

a clear link made with the transference of principal influence into teaching practice.

Researcher: The values, this spirituality that's coming through from your principal ...definitely has a positive influence?

*Definitely, because sometimes you know I, in fact I said to him 'You're good for me'. Because when I'm watching him deal with a situation I think right now I know what to do, I know how to calm him, I know the right things to say, I know the right approaches. What would Murray do, so he does, he's been good.*

*He never ever stands around and says there's no hope for this child, everybody is worth being given the opportunity, and he's taken some tough kids in here. People that have been expelled from schools and things. But he's always got out to try and give them the very best, the opportunity. If they haven't taken it, well then that's their fault.*

*But I think that leads me in to my class, my children, and I've got an autistic child who is very draining...but if he's really bad I can quite happily pick him up and take him to Murray and leave him with Murray for ten minutes and come back out. And he calms down (BS, teacher Debbie, 1:4).*

### ***Ambivalence and uncertainty***

A few of the teacher participants were unsure about spirituality in their principal's leadership and its effects on them professionally. This was not unexpected based on the controversial nature of spirituality and the complexity of attributing influence to an integral dimension of leadership. In the next quote the teacher begins by expressing uncertainty. After a while she identifies that the principal is a spiritual person and describes several practical ways that the principal's spirituality is integrated into her role. However, over-riding these thoughts are several questions that this teacher raises regarding whether those behaviours necessarily pertain to spirituality or are just standard professional conduct of educational leaders. The teacher does concede that her teaching has changed as a result of the principal's introduction of the 'assess to learn' contract. However she remains uncertain about attributing this change to spirituality in the principal's leadership. The principal in this scenario did believe her decision and effort to get the 'assess to learn contract' into her school

was related to the integration of her spirituality into leadership. The finding is important because it shows the complexity of leadership influence and the difference between the perceptions of the principal and teacher.

Researcher: How would you describe the spirituality in your principal's leadership and what makes you think that way?

*I don't know even how to answer that question. Spirituality in her leadership... I know she is a spiritual person, and we're well aware of that because she discusses her beliefs openly about different things. So I guess in that regard we are all aware where she stands ... her belief system.*

*Um... (thinking about question) she wants to foster values like cooperation and getting along and everything like that in the school so that's a strong focus and we've had professional development on it so that is part of her spirituality in what she values and what she'd like to foster in the school. You know she comes along and gives you a back rub and she does value people and give compliments and cards, so you know she is trying to ... but whether that's just what all principals do ...*

*I don't know how much is it spirituality or how much of it is just all principals will be trying to foster up their team? (YS, teacher Iris, 1:3).*

*Again, you know my teaching has changed because of the 'assess to learn' contract etc so whether another principal would have brought that in and we would have all changed as well ...*

*but she [her principal] is totally supportive of that but whether or not we would have changed anyway I don't know (YS, teacher Iris, 1:5).*

There was another example in the data in which a different teacher questioned the identification of certain behaviours with spirituality. This teacher wondered whether they are 'necessarily connected'. This finding affirmed the difficulty of distinguishing spirituality as an isolatable variable separate from other leadership behaviour. In the following quote the teacher asks me about the behaviours I believed were aligned with spirituality. I affirmed the question but did not answer it, deferring the issue back to the teacher. Her next two thoughts show some ambivalence with ascribing caring behaviour automatically to another person's spirituality. This finding shows the teacher's awareness that caring behaviour may have other explanations and sources of motivation. She also implies that there is more to spirituality than behaviour.

*The care, all those sorts of things you talked about, do you align those with spirituality? Is that what you're saying?*

Researcher: That's a very good question.

*Or are they the result of just what every person can be? Are they necessarily connected to spirituality?* (YS, teacher Georgette, 2:3).

Another teacher from a different school stated her perception that she was unsure if spirituality in principal leadership would affect her in the classroom or not. However, she did affirm that spirituality in principal leadership within the school as a whole had indirectly influenced her by giving her confidence to share professional problems and seek collegial help. The implication being that spirituality in principal leadership has contributed at least in part, to the creating a staff culture of trust and collegiality in which it is safe for teachers to disclose professional issues, rather than operating in isolation and fear. Also embedded in the following comment is the difficulty of quantifying the influence of spirituality.

*I'm not sure how much spirituality as such influences me in the classroom, or the spirituality of anyone else wouldn't really influence me in the classroom but what it does do is give me the confidence to go and speak to other people about, or I'll approach different people based on their strengths or feelings* (BS, teacher Fiona, 1:2).

This finding suggests that the influence of spirituality varied amongst participant teachers, being perceived in some areas of their professional lives but not in others. When questioned further, Fiona said the spirituality of her principal, in particular through the value of care has had, 'a massive influence on me as a teacher, because I'd never come across a school quite like this school' (BS, teacher Fiona, 1:2). She attributed this *massive* influence to the spirituality perspective of the principal being not merely in words on a policy document but genuinely practiced and sustained in the everyday life of the school.

### *Limiting and restricting effects of spirituality in principal leadership*

Some participants contributed insights (not necessarily related to their own current contexts), that suggested problems associated with the lack of it or inappropriate use of it, can and do exist. In my case study the teacher participants identified contexts that included problems with the implementation of school-wide changes, problems with communication about school wide events, a lack of comprehensive collaborative decision making, and problems with religio-spirituality perspectives being insufficiently filtered and fitted to specific school contexts. Due to its integrated nature, spirituality was implicated with each of these scenarios. In each incident spirituality was not a singular cause of the problems, nor was spirituality linked to any systemic or prolonged negative effects on the teachers.

For example, in one incident that was described, two mistakes in decision making were believed to have had limiting and restricting effects on some teachers. One of the mistakes related to the provision of a professional development programme designed to enhance teacher-student relationship and student achievement. Attendance at the ensuing professional development meetings resulted in one of the teacher participants feeling exhausted due to the extra after school time involved. Her morale suffered and she had feelings of resigning.

The second incident involved a fundraising idea for poor people in developing countries. Like the previous scenario this idea was motivated by intentions connected with the principal's spirituality, yet it divided the school community. There were those who supported the venture and those who thought it was outside of the scope of the public school which had its own pressing needs. In both cases the negative effects of the integration of the principal's spirituality into professional leadership were unintended and initially unknown by the principal until it was brought to his attention. The resulting problems however, were temporary and I understood from what participants described they were also amicably resolved once the issues were discussed and acted upon.

Another teacher from the same school, who was very affirming of the principal's spirituality in principal leadership, made a comment that she was aware that there were some on the staff who didn't like some expressions of his spirituality in his role. The extent of this dislike and the exact nature of events related to this comment were not provided. However from the quotation below, it appears to be related to a few staff not liking some of his religio-spirituality perspectives.

*Well he's a very...he is a devout Christian and some staff members don't like it. They say that he pushes it a bit much... So I guess it's obvious in everything that he does that he feels like that strongly but the principal...he doesn't wave a flag or anything like that in my opinion.*

*But I think it comes through in his caring personality and I think the fact that he will take a personal interest in staff members and I really feel like he cares about me as a one of the plebs, I still think he really cares about me, so that's the Christian side of him coming out, the good part of him.*

*I think that he really wants people to behave in a good moral like way. I think that he wants people to look beyond the day to day things and to see the bigger picture (GT, Teacher Bonny, 1:3).*

The teacher, who made these statements in the quote above, identified herself as, 'not a practising Christian', yet she went on to explain how she personally felt the principal's spirituality was having a very positive affect on her, which was in contrast to the alleged disaffected staff. That is, the principal's spirituality was linked to an increased sense of this teacher's self-worth, moral purpose and future outlook. This finding shows the subjective nature of influence attributed to spirituality in principal leadership. Spirituality in principal leadership can have diverse or seemingly contradictory effects on teachers, depending on their perspectives. It also shows the challenge of weaving religious meanings of spirituality into public school principalship.

In another school, some exceptional, unforeseen and personal circumstances impaired the principal from continuing in leadership. During this prolonged, disruptive and uncertain period, the principal was under significant strain which contributed to some problems arising. Some of the teacher participants believed the principal's spirituality in leadership was also disaffected by these events. For example one of the teacher participants explained a situation where the principal

had expressed her spirituality in what was perceived to be an inappropriate manner to another staff member who subsequently came to her for counsel.

*It's almost been a panic button approach [reference to principal action] which has not been positive, ... it's been accepted but I've needed to deal with that with the person [another staff member] to reassure that Christianity doesn't always occur when the panic button is pushed but it's more a growing into a relationship thing... we are a staff who are very accepting and gracious, it would be fair to say, it has been accepted as a need at that time for the principal to do that (YS, teacher Georgette, 2:3).*

The principal's inappropriate action was clearly linked to the significant tragedy the principal had experienced and the trauma she was processing. There was nothing in the data to suggest that it was typical of her normal behaviour in principal leadership. Although the principal's intentions were well meaning, they did negatively affect the staff member and caused negative repercussions for Georgette who had to respond to her colleagues concerns. In the final interview round, Georgette explained how issues linked to the principal's spirituality during this traumatic time, had placed her in challenging circumstances primarily because she shared a similar spirituality perspective to the principal. This finding also implies that the spirituality of the teacher can have a reciprocal effect on the principal.

*We've been through ... very difficult times and having the same spiritual base as our principal has ... put me in a very challenging situation because I have ... it has set me apart from my peers in a sense, that there has been a lot expected of me to find answers, and to support (YS, teacher georgette, 3:4).*

These findings into some less positive influences linked to spirituality in principal leadership were small in terms of the overall data gathered. They were exceptional rather than the norm, reflecting the human vulnerability and weakness that all leaders are subject to. In this case study, all three principals explained that having spirituality in their leadership did not equate with faultless leadership. Personal weaknesses were acknowledged and they were realistic in terms of their expectations of the influence of their spirituality in principal leadership, as the following quote illustrates.

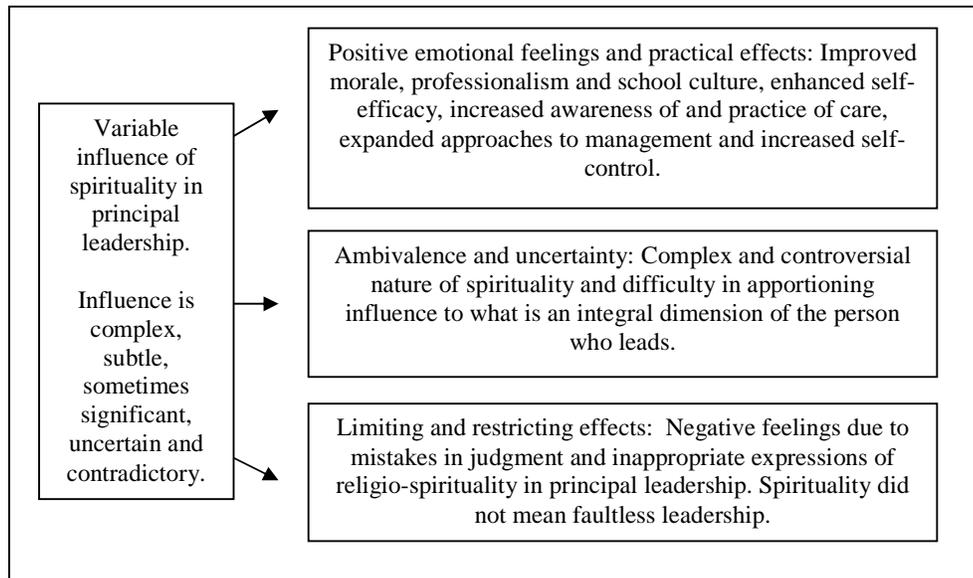
Researcher: What do you think teachers might look for in the spirituality in their principal leader?

*Consistency, probably lots of values – honesty, transparency, espoused theory and practice, probably really important. What I say and what I do, whether it lines up.*

*That’s probably one of the biggest challenge that I have. Is what I believe in, is it actually what I’m doing? I guess another challenging thing is that if I am known as a Christian, that I don’t let the LORD down, how I live. I don’t mean that in a sort of, it sounds a bit sort of perfectionist, it’s just a challenge (YS, principal, 2:5-6).*

The figure below summarises the variable influences described by teachers which they attributed to spirituality in principal leadership.

Figure 8: What *influence* might spirituality in principal leadership have on teachers and their teaching?



### Summary

The findings presented in this chapter relate to two research questions, 'By what means might spirituality in principal leadership be influential?' And, 'What influence might spirituality in principal leadership have on teachers and their

teaching? Together with the previous chapter ,they conclude the findings of my case study.

The means by which spirituality in principal leadership was believed by participants to be influential was through integrity, quality care, professional competence and appropriateness. These attributes of the character, calibre, and conduct of principal leadership enabled spirituality to be perceived and received by the teachers. The findings also showed that spirituality could be conveyed in different ways, directly, indirectly and reciprocally between the principals and teachers. Together these five themes provided understanding of the complexity by which personal meanings of spirituality integrated into professional practice might be influential.

Integrity was important because it showed alignment between the principal's espoused beliefs and values, and professional practice. It also modelled the way for teachers to observe and imitate. Competence in the role of principal-ship sustained over time built up a sense of professional credibility with the teacher participants. Where competence (not perfection) and credibility were acknowledged and respected, spirituality was more readily identified and received by teachers.

Appropriateness of spirituality was a challenge because of the stressful and unpredictable nature of the principal's work, and the diversity of situations they could find themselves in. Where mistakes were made it was important to model a process of reconciliation. Mistakes could then become valuable means by which spirituality was influential.

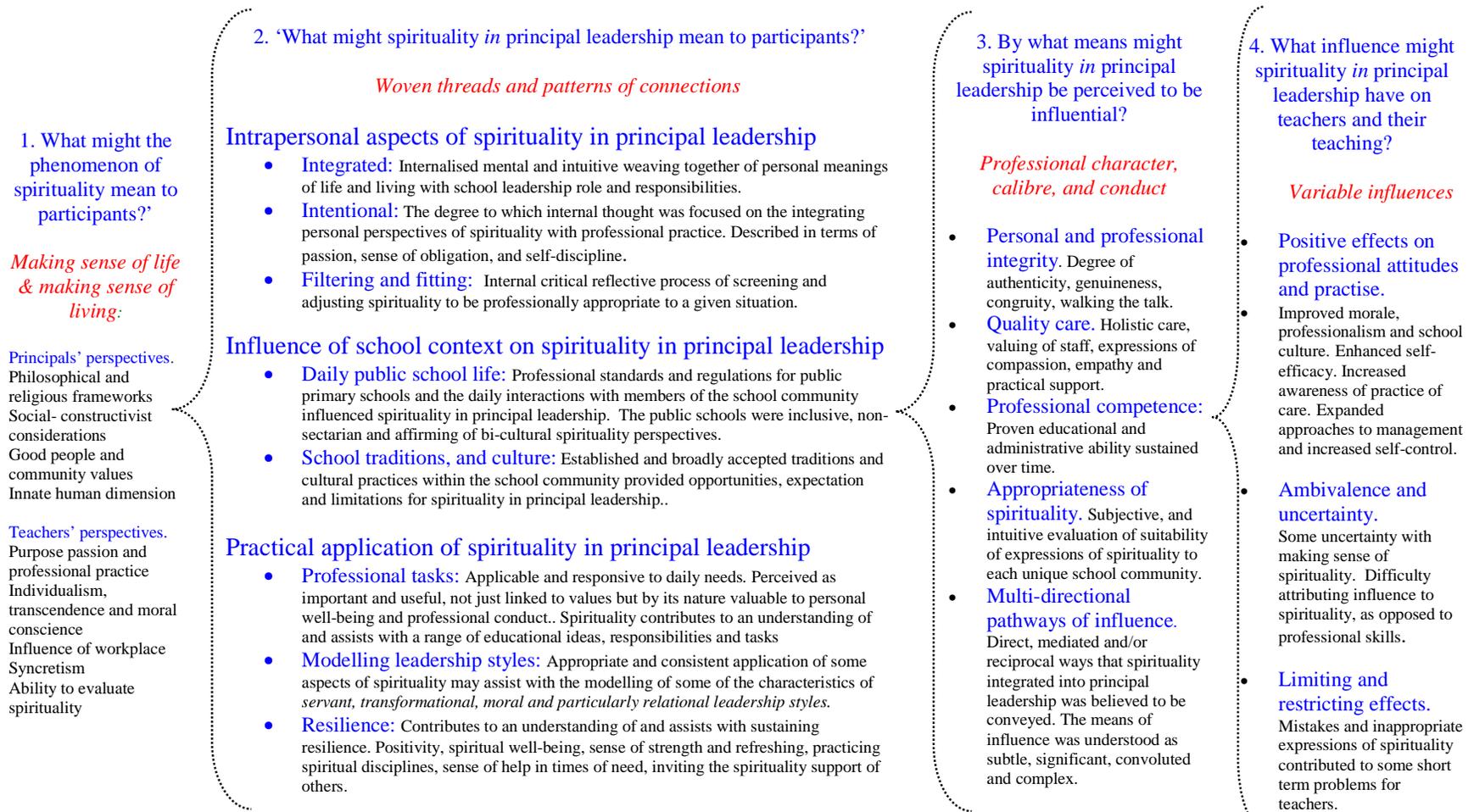
The findings showed that within the conditions described above, spirituality in principal leadership was believed by most participants to contribute a positive emotional and practical effect. These effects included improved morale, professionalism and school culture; enhanced self-efficacy; increased awareness of and practice of care; expanded approaches to management and increased self-control.

The findings also showed that teachers perception and experience of the influence of spirituality in principal leadership varied. Some teachers expressed a sense of uncertainty with attributing influence to their principal's spirituality. A few teachers described incidences where spirituality in principal leadership was perceived to contribute, to some limiting and restricting effects. Several participants were unclear about the amount of significance spirituality contributed as opposed to other leadership skills. There were no findings in this case study that spirituality in principal leadership was causative of systemic and enduring institutional problems.

Due to the subjective task of making sense of the sometimes subtle and convoluted influences of spirituality in public school leadership, the findings are tentative. The inter-connectivity of spirituality with professional skills of principal leadership also made it difficult to determine the significance that spirituality contributed. There were also other factors influencing teachers and their teaching, apart from the principal's leadership. Overall the findings showed that spirituality in principal leadership was positively influential through the quality of the character and calibre of the leader and not the imposition of his or her power.

The diagram on the following page presents an overview of all of my findings presented in chapters four and five. It shows four columns each with an overarching research question, key themes and a summary of the findings relating to that question. The first theme, making sense of life and making sense of living, provides an understanding of the personal meanings of spirituality that participants brought into their public school contexts. The second question provides insight into the woven threads and patterns of connections pertaining to the praxis of spirituality *in* principal leadership. These two questions pertain to the previous chapter. The third and fourth columns summarise what has been presented in this chapter. Although they set forth in a linear, left to right, and top-down fashion across the page, I believe the findings should be considered as complex, and inter-connected.

Figure 9: Overview of the findings of the research into spirituality in principal leadership and its influence on teachers and teaching.



## CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

*I couldn't take spirituality out of my practice, because it's so integral.*  
(YS, principal, 2:3)

### **Introduction**

The above quote from one of the principal participants describes the strong interconnectivity she felt between her personal experience of spirituality and its integration into professional practice. The focus of my research was to inquire into the lived experience of spirituality in principal leadership within three public primary school contexts, and to understand its influence on teachers and their teaching. To achieve this I chose an interpretive, constructivist paradigm, with applied phenomenological perspectives, supported by a descriptive case study strategy. The intrapersonal aspects of spirituality reported in the findings illustrates the complexity of the phenomenon and the appropriateness of my research process in which the unique situated meanings of each person's life and workplace context were examined together.

I derived the findings from a sample of twelve participants, three principals and nine teachers. The methods used to obtain the data were semi-structured interviews, supported by overt non-participant observations and principal reflective journals. These procedures were conducted in three phases across a school year. Of particular interest to me was the meaning attributed to spirituality from *both* principal and teacher perspectives within public primary school contexts, a gap identified in the research literature.

In this chapter I discuss the key findings reported in the previous two chapters. The discussion focuses on describing and interpreting the main themes, and how these relate to each other. It also examines how well the findings address the underlying research questions which shaped this study and their degree of alignment or otherwise, with the literature reviewed in chapter two. This chapter is structured around the four underlying research questions and the key themes, Making sense of life and making sense of living; Woven threads and patterns of

connections; Professional character, calibre and conduct; Variable influences on teachers and teaching.

### **Making sense of life and making sense of living**

Participants' descriptions of spirituality reflected New Zealand's pluralistic society and the multiple perspectives discussed in the literature review (Barnett, Krell and Sendry, 2000; Caioppe, 2000; Frick, 2009; Gibbs, 2006; Hunnex, 1986; Smith, 2000). Participants' knowing about spirituality was based around their mental processing of observable, measureable, life experiences (empirical evidence), as well as non-observable intuition and/or faith. Participants utilized *a posteriori* and *a priori* knowledge or justifications to support their meanings of spirituality. As one principal explained spirituality, 'There's a dimension to people that is more than what you can see' (GT, principal, 1:1).

Participants' broad meanings of spirituality did not conform to a simple definition. Rather their meanings reflected the multi-dimensional frameworks for describing spirituality discussed in the literature review by Alexander (2001), Elkins, Hedstrom, Hughes, Leaf and Saunders (1988) and many of the assumptions held by Tisdell (2003). These broad meanings affirmed that spirituality is a complex and controversial human phenomenon, the meaning of which may be shaped and re-shaped by diverse perspectives and experiences. My findings also showed that participant's attributed to spirituality personal, social and transcendent connectedness, self-identity and meaning making, and a desire to move towards greater authenticity (Gibbs, 2006; Palmer, 1998; Starratt, 2003). These characteristics were woven through the lived reality of the principals' lives, through their beliefs, moral-values, attitudes and the quality of their actions.

The findings reinforced to me the value and appropriateness of my decision to use a constructionist paradigm in my research methodology focused on the lived experiences of spirituality by the participants (Laverly, 2003; Van Manen, 2002). A decision supported by Roehlkepartain's (2007, p. 1) belief, that it is better to avoid a definition that is, 'final or comprehensive, thus inviting continued dialogue and exploration.'

The participants' meanings of spirituality were profound, encompassing existential, philosophical, social, cultural, and religious understandings based on past and present experiences, and their aspirations for the future. Participants' were also able to relate spirituality to their beliefs, values, attitudes and behaviour for living relationally and responsibly in society and in their school contexts. Participants' personal meanings of spirituality were socially constructed, shaped and re-shaped by interconnected personal, family, institutional, cultural and religious experiences. Furthermore, some of the participants found spirituality challenging to explain clearly and confidently. For these participants spirituality was something they were still trying to make sense of. These findings are similar to Tisdell's (2003, p. 28) comment that, 'Spirituality is an elusive topic. Different people define it in different ways, but all definitions somehow seem to be incomplete.'

Spirituality was understood by participants as something practical, and developmental, a work in progress (Teasdale (2001). It was believed to be responsive to the vicissitudes of life, and in particular to their school workplace responsibilities. Some of the participants linked their personal meanings of spirituality to their passionate commitment and sense of purpose in their professional roles as teachers and principals. These findings suggested that spirituality *in* principal leadership could be developed and applied responsively to professional situations. These practical and developmental aspects to spirituality described by my participants were similar to the meanings of spirituality reported in the case studies by Conrad, Brown and Crockett, 2006; Dixon, 2002; and Ramirez, 2009.

Sectarian and cultural diversity has been documented in New Zealand educational literature since the inauguration of the public education system in the latter part of the nineteenth century (Codd, 1980; Ewing, 1972; Health and Physical Education in the New Zealand Curriculum, 1999; The Report of the Commission on Education in New Zealand, 1962; The Report of the Committee on Health and Social Education, 1977). Participants in my study did not report feelings of sectarian division. They were aware of the need to be inclusive and tolerant in their professional practice towards cultural and religious diversity. I believe these

findings reflect not only their professionalism but also liberal changes to New Zealand's society.

Some participants provided nuanced insights into the personal meanings of spirituality that I had not discussed in the literature review. For example Maori cultural perspectives of spirituality (*wairuatanga*) were an integral part of the educational philosophy, pedagogy and learning experiences within the Maori language immersion unit at one of the school sites which was consistent with the literature by Durie (1994), Smith (2000) and Walker (2004). Some of the teachers' perspectives of spirituality reflected cosmological beliefs derived from the indigenous Maori culture of New Zealand woven in with Judeo-Christian religious teachings. This concept of syncretism or the intermixing of different spiritualities was something I had not discussed in the literature review.

Participants possessed an inclination to self-evaluate their own spirituality and the spirituality of others. Participants emphasized that their evaluation of spirituality centred on the quality of what people said and the way they behaved. Participants believed they were able to discern and recognise differing qualities of spirituality by way their feelings, observation and critical reflection. These findings related to the literature by Du Four (2004) and Fairholm (2000) who believe that the spiritual side of self needs to involve the head and the heart, a reference to engaging the mind and feelings when weighing up decisions and actions. Self-evaluation of spirituality was important in its connection with knowing and demonstrating appropriate social and moral behaviour. Giacalone and Jurkiewicz (2003), and Winters Moore (2008) also found that spirituality was associated with social responsibility and ethical action in the workplace. My findings regarding participants' ability to self-evaluate spirituality are important because they suggest spirituality could be self-monitored in principal leadership, and that teachers would be able to identify influential behaviours in their principals' leadership related to spirituality.

Many of the participants described having some experience of Christian religious perspectives of spirituality, a finding which reflected the historical and enduring influence of Christianity as a religion in New Zealand society. Three participants described having a strong practising Christian faith. Their descriptions of

spirituality reflected biblical religious doctrines including beliefs in having a relational experience with God, through his Son Jesus, and that the Holy Spirit was believed to live in them. These transcendent and supernatural perspectives of Christian spirituality were consistent with the literature by Meyer (2009); Van Reken (1996) and Yount (1996). For these participants their religious perspectives of spirituality reflected Thayer-Bacon's (2003) position that, 'Our religious beliefs represent our spiritual views, which influence the categories that we use to make sense of our experiences' (p. 256). This was different from some of the literature reviewed that sought to exclude issues of God, ultimate commitment, worship and devotion from meanings of spirituality (Kumar, 2005; Kurtz, 1973).

There were also several participants who did not profess any religious affiliation but included agnostic and metaphysical understandings in their meaning making. These participants believed there was something guiding them. They had a sense of a spirit, or some higher purpose to life, something more than a humanistic and materialistic view of their lives (Hunnex, 1986; Waaijman, 2002). Several other participants acknowledged they had had religious church experiences in their past, but those experiences were not considered significant to their understanding of spirituality now. These findings are consistent with religious demographics and trends within New Zealand society (Academic dictionaries and encyclopedias – Religion in New Zealand, 2008). They reflect New Zealand's Christian heritage derived from the country's British colonial past as well as post-modern liberal attitudes towards traditional religious institutions today.

My findings showed me therefore, that religious perspectives of spirituality were believed to be important for some participants and not for others which was consistent with a range of literature reviewed (Alexander, 2000; de Souza, 2004; Shields, Edwards, & Sayani, 2005). These diverse meanings of spirituality were similar to the findings by Woods (2007, p. 151) in which she found that spiritual experiences, 'were not confined to religious believers.' Considered together the religious and non-religious perspectives illustrated Palmer's (1993) assertion that there is a paradoxical nature of spirituality and that diverse and even contradictory world-views exist.

Participants described their practical, social, and behavioural application of spirituality using a variety of terms. These common terms tended to focus around the purpose of life, and the beliefs, values and exemplary or moral behaviours that they felt should characterise people's lives. All participants spoke of values of which they shared many in common such as love, integrity, and honesty. Some of the participants' understandings of values were similar to Noddings' (1998) and Van Dusen's (2005) humanistic and secular views of care and morals. These participants valued care because of its perceived importance in maintaining a cohesive society and an effective learning environment. Some participants also believed the practical, social, and relational behaviours associated with their sense of spirituality should have priority over the academic subjects of the curriculum. Without these social behaviours they believed children would be unlikely to participate successfully in school based education and in society later in life.

Several participants included spirituality perspectives on values that were informed by transcendent Christian perspectives. These perspectives were similar to those discussed in the New Zealand educational reports by Currie (1962) and Johnson (1977). These participants believed their understanding of values, while shaped by their experiences and social milieu (Palinscar, 1998), originated outside of themselves and society. This transcendent perspective included supernatural sources. These participants (two principals and one teacher) described how they prioritized care, because care was consistent with their belief in a deity. Such behaviour and thinking was viewed as an extension of their spiritual relationship with that deity. This meant that care, as a dimension of spirituality, was linked to motivation, their sense of accountability, and responsibility to their perception of that deity. The findings showed therefore that my participants shared many values in common irrespective of their spirituality perspective. I believe this was important for spirituality in principal leadership to be accepted and influential in their public school contexts.

The literature reviewed indicated a renewed interest in spirituality in the workplace over the past decade (e.g. DuFour, 2004; Giacolone, Jurkiwicz & Fry, 2003; West-Burnham, 2003). However the findings in my case study showed that most of the teacher participants found spirituality in principal leadership an unfamiliar topic and difficult to discuss in the context of their school workplace.

One explanation for this might be New Zealand's social mores of not discussing spirituality in public because of its association with religion which is considered by many to be a private matter. Another interpretation might be that there is lack of understanding or perception of the purpose of spirituality in school leadership because spirituality has never formed a major part of modern leadership or management theory and training (Fairholm, 2000a). I observed that participants' unfamiliarity and reticence became less of a problem during the latter stages of the data gathering process. I believe this can be attributed to the trusting relationships being established, and their increased thinking about the subject through participation in the research.

Most participants believed spirituality was an innate human dimension, something everyone possessed, but not something that was universally acknowledged (Hyde, 2006; Watson, 2000). These findings affirmed the difficulty with including spirituality in public school contexts and in national curriculum documents. Most but not all participants believed that spirituality was significant to their lives and to the way they sought to live. A few participants, while able to converse about spirituality, did not describe their interest in the topic as seriously or as passionately as most of the others. All participants were able to link personal meanings of spirituality in practical ways to their public educational roles and responsibilities. Understanding participants' spirituality in the three school contexts was helpful to my understanding by giving me another perspective of the challenges, opportunities and limitations with spirituality in principal leadership.

In summary the theme, 'Making sense of life and making sense of living' conveys a positive and meaningful understanding of the phenomenon of spirituality by the teachers and principal participants in my case study. It acknowledges the complexity and perceived practical usefulness of spirituality which was suggested in the literature by Gibbs (2006) and in the Australian National Declaration for Education (2001) document. These findings relating to this theme closely reflect the diverse views contained in the literature review. I was excited with my participants' rich explanations of what spirituality meant to them and I believe their views concur with the statement by the New Zealand educational researcher Fraser (2005, p. 64), who said, 'Acknowledging spirituality is a huge step towards extending what it is to be human.'

### **Woven threads and patterns of connections.**

This second theme metaphorically describes the findings of the research question, ‘What might spirituality in principal leadership mean to participants?’ Woven threads and patterns of connections, highlights the interconnectivity of the intrapersonal, contextual and practical aspects of what spirituality *in principal leadership* meant to participants. Inter-connectivity of spirituality with self and the world was identified in several of the studies cited in the literature review (e.g. Keyes, Hanley-Maxwell, & Capper, 1999, & Ramirez, 2009). The metaphor of *weaving* also conveys the intentional, constructive and socially interactive aspects of spirituality in principal leadership, the threads from the principal woven in with the threads from the people within the school. It is in the intersection of the threads that the praxis of the lived-experienced of spirituality becomes visible. I understand praxis to mean an interactive, critical and ongoing process (Carr & Kemmis, 1986), operating between the principals’ world-views, beliefs, values, and their professional behaviour. The findings from my case study reinforced Waaijman and Vriend’s (2002, p. 314) assertion that, ‘in its own original way the language of praxis gives an account of an understanding of lived experience.’

The findings from my study showed that for two of the principals their praxis of spirituality in principal leadership included belief in a supernatural Spirit. This Spirit was believed to assist them with their critical reflective processing of the degree of authenticity between their inner beliefs and values, and their outward professional practice (Goertzen & Barbuto, 2001). One principal described his praxis in leadership arising from a values-based spirituality, although two of the teacher participants said they were aware of this principal’s private religious life. These findings partially align with Creighton’s (1999) assertion that sacred perspectives of spirituality can have secular currency or value, especially when appropriately applied. This finding is similar to the extensive work by Dent, Higgins and Wharff (2005, p. 642), whereby they say, ‘Theory development should recognize that any form of spirituality also includes practices and beliefs (i.e. a religion) and that the accompanying beliefs are an important, if not more important element of how someone’s spirituality is manifest in his or her leadership.’

Smith's (1999, p. 2) humanistic interpretation that in praxis 'there can be no prior knowledge of the right means by which we realize the end in a particular situation' was partially applicable when the principals were dealing with unfamiliar, and complex social problems. This was because although the way forward was unclear, the principals' spirituality did support them with prior knowledge of moral values regarding how to act rightly, justly and professionally in order to care for students' socially and academically. The integrated presence of spirituality did not remove dilemmas but was perceived by the principals to assist in the process of working through the difficulty of knowing how to act rightly.

Within the literature reviewed on spirituality in principal leadership, praxis was not commonly discussed. Most of the literature focused on the practical manifestations of spirituality in leadership without relating these to the underlying theoretical nature and beliefs from where spirituality was sourced. Two exceptions were Woods (2007) who has a chapter called 'a theoretical perspective on human spirituality', and Ramirez (2009) who provided biographical insights into the praxis of four principals. In both cases the contextual details focused on school or personal demographics. However in both of these studies there was an absence of teacher voice in helping to understand the complexity of the praxis of spirituality in principal leadership.

The findings of my case study show the praxis of the principals' spirituality involving critical reflective thinking about their world-views, beliefs, values and attitudes. This was a complex process which drew on crafted wisdom derived from experience, a process which shaped and reshaped their '*way*' for living out their spirituality in their professional practice. Some of the teacher participants who worked closely with their principals affirmed that their principals did critically think about the alignment between their spirituality informed values and leadership actions. Some of the teachers also affirmed that their principals were responsive to school contexts and personal mistakes in order to maintain ethical integrity in their leadership, similar to the ethical leadership discourse by Lashway (1996). The critical reflective thinking aspect of spirituality in principal leadership was a responsive relational activity, both purposeful and spontaneous,

a weaving in progress, designed and re-designed in the day to day life of the school.

### *Intrapersonal aspects to spirituality in principal leadership*

My findings showed there were several significant intrapersonal aspects to the meaning of spirituality in principal leadership. The following discussion focuses on the integrated nature of spirituality in principal leadership, the intentionality of principals to include spirituality into their practice, and the process by which internalised personal meanings of spirituality were believed to be filtered and fitted into leadership. Ramirez (2009) identified in the rationale of her thesis the need to explore intrapersonal dimensions of spirituality through qualitative inquiry. In my study internalised personal meanings of spirituality were believed by the principals to play an important role in their professional thinking, beliefs and attitudes, and to act as a guide to their behaviour. In this sense intrapersonal aspects of leadership are related to another term used in literature called the 'inner landscape of leadership' (Youngs, 2003). Spirituality was perceived by participants as beginning 'inside' the leader and becoming visible via their leadership actions and interactions with others.

### *Integration*

The first intrapersonal aspect of spirituality identified in the findings was its integration into principal leadership. Spirituality was not readily separated from leadership as the quote cited at the beginning of this chapter attested, 'I couldn't take spirituality out of my practice, because it's so integral' (YS, principal, 2:3). This finding was consistent with Hanley, Maxwell and Capper's (1999) ethnographic study of a principal, in which they quoted a principal saying, 'spirituality is the core of my leadership.' Conrad, Brown and Crockett's (2006) study stated that one's sense of morality could be 'infused' into various elements that undergird leadership.

The principal participants in my study described their spirituality as deeply embedded into their whole being, physically, emotionally, cognitively and socially; even in their hearts, out of which sprang their values and passion. Some participants described the integral nature of spirituality in terms of 'it's who you

are'. This was similar to Ramirez, (2009) who discussed the integrality of spirituality by saying that 'leadership must be rooted in authentic being; being undergirds doing' (p. 31). The integrated aspect to spirituality is supported by Flemming's (2005, p. 145) phenomenological study of spirituality in adult education leaders in which she says, 'spirituality seemed to be the matrix [womb or the ground substance] of spirituality in leadership.'

As an integral dimension of leadership, spirituality was believed to be part of the principals' thinking about what they were doing, why they were working as principals of their schools, and why their work was important. This finding was similar to Flintham's (2003) research in England which showed that head-teachers could articulate a value system 'underpinning' their headship roles. The degree to which the principals or teachers perceived spirituality to be integrated suggested that it was variable or changeable, imperfect, being affected by a range of factors such as intentionality, inter-personal compatibility, professional experience, well-being, and their engagement in critical reflective practice.

The integrated dimension of spirituality made it difficult for participants to know what aspects of principal leadership were attributable to spirituality and how to apportion influence to spirituality as opposed to other influential aspects in leadership. In my study one principal said, 'I find it a little hard to separate them [good management skills and spirituality] because they are sort of intertwined with what I do (GT, principal, 1:5). This finding shared some commonality with the empirical study by Woods (2007) focused on spiritual *experiences* of a large sample of head-teachers across England. She cautions that, 'it is important not to make simplistic associations between spiritual experiences and attitudes and attributes of leadership' (p. 136). In contrast Wellman, Perkins, and Wellman (2009) *defined* spirituality as an independent variable, measured by the inventory on spirituality developed by Rayburn and Richmond (2003). Their results found varying degrees of statistical significance in the relationship between their definition of spirituality and five key leadership practices which they identified as 'challenging the process, inspiring a shared vision, enabling others to act, modelling the way, and encouraging the heart'.

### *Filtering and fitting*

Personal internalized meanings of spirituality were also believed by the principal participants to undergo a self-regulated, responsive, cognitive and intuitive filtering and fitting process in which expressions of spirituality were made professionally appropriate to school contexts. Private and personal meanings of spirituality were screened as they were brought into the professional life-world of leadership. Guiding this filtering and fitting process was their desire to walk with personal integrity to the inner beliefs and values they held. Some of the principals believed that the filtering and fitting of their spirituality was assisted by their religious perspectives. They spoke about this in terms of critically reflecting upon, ‘What would Jesus have them do’ and through praying to God about a problem. All the principals described how they engaged in internal dialogue within themselves as part of this process. All principals were aware of bringing their respective meanings of spirituality into their school leadership in such a way that it maintained a cohesive, relational and inclusive school community. Ramirez’ (2009) research into the praxis of four, public school principals’ spirituality in the United States, identified a similar process. In her key findings she says,

*The terms used dealt primarily with “going inward” and being “reflective” about the situation. The term “inner voice” was used quite often as the participants ran situations through their “spiritual filter” seeking guidance, direction, and peace all the while adding the lessons learned to their cache of wisdom (p. 111.).*

The findings of my case study showed that the principals not only exercised cognitive and intuitive filtering of their spirituality in professional practice, but that it was also subsequently *fitted* to be appropriate to the external context. This was particularly evident in the descriptions provided by the principals who espoused a Christian religious perspective to their spirituality. They did not filter out their faith but were professionally careful to avoid using inappropriate religious language or behaviour. One of the principals was identified by a teacher participant as religious even though the principal did not explain his spirituality from that perspective. This teacher remarked that his principal had a strong spirituality *coming out* from him, but it was not described as offensive or problematic in the public school context. The concept of filtering and fitting

spirituality into professional practice is important because it shows that spirituality can be adapted to suit public school contexts.

The principals believed that their spirituality was filtered and fitted for their professional life both consciously and sub-consciously. It could also be influenced by school contexts in a reciprocal process. The principal participants described it as a self-managed reflective activity, in which they were aware of the need to evaluate situations and adapt their responses depending on the efficacy of their previous decisions and actions. In these ways spirituality in principal leadership was shaped and re-shaped by the vicissitudes of school life, and in particular their interpersonal experiences. An example of this filtering and fitting was described in the way one of the principals 'edited' the spirituality content of his weekly school newsletters. In processing feedback from a colleague and by engaging in personal critical reflection, he adjusted inspirational quotations for life derived from a sacred text, to be suitable to the wider school community. This term editing, was a helpful metaphor to illustrate the process of filtering and fitting of spirituality for a particular audience.

Teachers' insights into critical incidents relating to spirituality in principal leadership made the responsive process of filtering and fitting clearer to me. Some teacher participants played a direct part in bringing issues to their principal's attention and were able to describe how the principal responded to those issues. The successes and mistakes encountered by the principals were believed to assist with future filtering and fitting of their spirituality in subsequent leadership situations. In this way spirituality was believed to be integrated into effective leadership practice. This theme of filtering and fitting was not identified by me in the initial literature review process. I believe it builds on the findings of Ramirez (2009) and makes a contribution to the growing body of research into spirituality in principal leadership.

### *Intentionality*

Intentionally integrating, filtering, and fitting spirituality into principal-ship was described by the principal participants as a conscious day by day, constant challenge and discipline. Intentionality was aligned with the three principals' passion and self-discipline and their belief that spirituality was inherently

practical and purposeful. The principals illustrated their intentionality to integrate spirituality in to professional practice by such actions as pursuing social justice and caring for students. Two of the principals described how their intentionality to authentically and deliberately infuse their spirituality in their leadership practice was motivated by an exemplary role model, Jesus. Their intentionality was also described as having commenced before they came to work, through their devotional time early in the mornings. These findings into the intentional integration of spirituality in principal leadership link with some of the literature by Bhindi, and Duigan (1997). Ramirez (2009) also describes intentionality of spirituality in principal leadership, as enabling the four participants in her study to focus on their primary purpose, which was described as ‘service to others’ (p. 93).

Nevertheless, in spite of this talk of intentionality some of the findings described situations where spirituality was perceived by the principals to be operating at a more sub-conscious level. Spirituality informed beliefs, values, and actions were perceived to be automatically present in their busy daily decision making. This was illustrated by one principal who in the context of describing spirituality in his professional practice said, ‘*Well, I don’t necessarily think I’m going to do this because of spirituality;*[I don’t necessarily think] *I’m going to do this because this is what a good professional does...*’ (GT, principal 1:5) His point was that based on experience, he could act automatically without bringing to his conscious thoughts the rationale behind the decision. As his professional skills were an integral part of who he was, so too was his spirituality.

Intentionality to integrate spirituality into leadership practice did not equate with rightness or appropriateness. Some principals described situations when they made mistakes or oversights in their professional practice. A few of the teacher participants indicated areas where they felt that sometimes their principal could be more intentional with appropriate expressions of values and beliefs relating to spirituality. For example one of the teachers in acknowledging the principal’s care for the students’ learning, intimated there was room for greater effort in the principal’s care of some staff. This example helped to make clearer the relationship between intent in leadership and effect on followers. In relating these findings to the metaphor of woven threads and patterns of connections I believe

they suggest that the weavers at the loom need to keep in close touch with one another to ensure the threads are going in the right way and with the right tension.

### *Influence of school context on spirituality in principal leadership*

In my study all three principals believed their school contexts reciprocally influenced their leadership. This is consistent with the literature. For example, Glanz (2006, p. 36) discusses, 'the multi-faceted contextual, interpersonal and political factors influencing leadership.' In New Zealand, contextual influences on principals have become more significant since the introduction of the Government's Tomorrow's Schools reforms in 1990 in which locally elected Boards of Trustees assumed the governance role of the schools (Wylie, 1991). Since that time principals have become more accountable to their respective school communities. In my study some of the principals described situations where they felt their spirituality was integrated into their leadership interactions with members of their school boards of trustees. For example one principal talked about ensuring that his discussions with the board chairman about the school financial accounts were handled transparently and honestly. Another principal discussed how her spirituality perspectives were able to be integrated into discussions with the school board during the process of developing the school's charter.

The findings also described a range of ways and situations that the principals believed their spirituality in leadership was reciprocally influenced by their school contexts. For example the principals' daily encounters with social and educational problems with students provided expectations, opportunities and limitations for the principals to express and develop their spirituality in appropriate ways not only with the students concerned but with other people affected by the problems such as teachers and parents/caregivers. These situations required the principals to demonstrate care, compassion, self-control, justice and in some cases personal prayer when working through the issues. The three principals also described situations when they had received encouragement and care from a staff member or parent associated with the school. Expressions of spirituality in the sense of care and support were reciprocal.

The reciprocal influence between school context and spirituality in principal leadership is further illustrated in the following two quotes. In the first quote the principal explains how his low socio-economic school context led him to reflect on the needs of the children and draw on greater reserves of care.

*Being at Blue-sky school has basically revitalized my teaching in as far as having an empathy even more for children because some of them come from very difficult situations sort of quite different from perhaps you or I in our backgrounds that we were brought up. Yeah I think over the last six-seven years I've developed more heart for children (BS, Principal, 2:4).*

In the second quote a different principal explains the influence of school context as a kind of transformational experience, of having her 'eyes opened' and her values challenged and developed especially in terms of being more compassionate and non-judgmental.

*A lot of those sorts of values were extended when I went to [this] low decile school because I opened up to a level of society I didn't even realise existed. I had my eyes opened up and challenged because it's very easy to come from a pakeha middle-class female way looking at people's lives...we have to challenge ourselves as to what right have we to judge people (YS, principal 1:3).*

The principals not only brought their own professional perspectives of spirituality to school, but spirituality came into the school from the community. For example each school had an emphasis on personal values and educational goals which the principals needed to reinforce and model consistently in their practice. This important role of the principals contributed to the shaping and developing of each principal's praxis. The principals also described how that influence from their school context could come by way of feedback from teachers or parents. Some of the principals described receiving negative but constructive feedback from staff and parents that enabled the principals to align their spirituality in leadership more appropriately with the expectations of their school community.

I became increasingly aware of the influence of school context on spirituality in principal leadership through the hour long observations of the principals engaged in various tasks. For example, one of these observations took place one evening at the end of year senior school prize giving in the school hall. I observed during

this school assembly a whole range of opportunities, challenges and expectations for the spirituality of the principal to be expressed appropriately in their leadership role. For example I observed the principal modelling respect and reverence during karakia (prayer) which were spoken by representatives of the school's Maori community. I observed him singing the national anthem (God defend New Zealand) with sincerity knowing from earlier conversations that the words he sang were personally meaningful to his spirituality and his leadership practice. I also observed that the principal's speech of farewell to the senior students contained words of affirmation, encouragement and hope for the future. The values in the speech were illustrated with a biblical parable about the man who built his house upon the rock. I knew from earlier conversations that he intentionally integrated his spirituality into the drafting of his speech.

In another scenario I observed a different principal attending the school's Maori whanau unit end of year assembly. The protocols I observed, the karakia (prayers) by members of the unit, and the children's drama performance into which local Maori cosmological spiritual perspectives of were deeply woven, showed to me that this school context provided expectations and opportunities for spirituality not only in the curriculum but also for the principal to engage with. During the hour and a half assembly the principal's manner was respectful, caring, and honouring of the individual and collective 'mana' (authority and prestige) of the Maori staff, students and whanau (extended family) who were present. The principal's short speech affirmed appreciation for the work of the teachers and students. The principal's speech included a whakatoki (Maori proverb) which was appropriate and respectful of their culture and language.

As an observer, I felt this context was one where cultural spirituality perspectives were an integral and visible part of the life of the school and provided a reciprocal opportunity, and expectation for the integration of the principal's spirituality in leadership. This was made clearer to me when one of the Maori teacher participants at this school said, 'I think if the principal didn't share the ideas that we share together with this whanau system, I think we'd be rubbing noses pretty quickly, but she does. And this is what I find and she's encouraging and she backs up the curriculum and backs up whatever we've got (YS, teacher Hemi, 1:3). The reference to 'rubbing noses pretty quickly' is a colloquial expression

referring to a traditional Maori cultural greeting called, *te hongi*. Exchanging a *hongi* quickly would be like shaking someone's hand very briefly, suggesting no real warmth of friendship or deep agreement between the two people. The *hongi* is culturally significant to Maori because of its symbolism in the exchange of breath or spirit between two people as they draw near to one another to press their noses together. This observational experience at this Maori bilingual unit reinforced to me the Maori perspective described by Egan (2003, p. 221) that, 'Education should primarily be about *wairua* [the spirit or spiritual wellbeing]. Learning that does not impact *wairua*, will have little enduring value.' Participating in this assembly affirmed to me this public school context contained many elements of spirituality (Auser, 2007).

Principal participants also described their awareness of the diverse spirituality perspectives within their school communities, especially cultural-religious expressions. This diversity provided opportunities to demonstrate tolerance and inclusiveness. For example, one of the school principals said she and her staff acknowledged the festival of Diwali out of respect for a non-teaching staff member who identified with the Hindu religion. Another principal described his attendance on a school visit to a local Sikh community to better understand the Sikh children attending the school. Two of the principals acknowledged their schools taught about the Maori new-year festival called *Matariki*, and all the principals celebrated in some way the traditions associated with Christmas and Easter. One of the schools had a non-paid chaplain who according to the State School Chaplaincy programme acted in a pastoral care capacity for children in the school, listening to those with needs, providing guidance and support, encouraging children to look for appropriate solutions to their problems. Furthermore, all of the schools accommodated one of the weekly, half hour Christian programmes called *Bible in Schools* or *Cool Bananas*. These optional educational programmes teach values from a Christian perspective and reflect the historical and contemporary influence of Christian spirituality within New Zealand society.

Each principal was also subject to the interim professional standards (Ministry of Education, 1998) for school principals. These professional standards provide expectations of important knowledge, skills, and attitudes principals are expected

to demonstrate. The standards are grouped into six key dimensions, professional leadership; strategic management; staff management; relationship management; financial and asset management; statutory, and reporting requirements. Spirituality perspectives could be integrated into all of the standards especially in terms of care, honesty and integrity. Whether the principals wanted to go beyond the professional standards in response to their spirituality was not clear in the findings. The issue of spirituality in principal leadership and its relevance to professional standards was not a topic I had come across in the literature review.

In summary, spirituality was not only able to be integrated into the principals' practice but spirituality was clearly present in a wide range of ways through the people, culture and events within the school. I began to realise that secularity did not mean the absence of spirituality, but rather the need to be careful, respectful, inclusive, and non-sectarian. Spirituality in principal spirituality in my study meant the principals focused on appropriately integrating their world-views, beliefs, values, attitudes and behaviour in appropriate and safe ways to their school contexts and situations. These insights into the woven threads and patterns of connections with spirituality in principal leadership and school contexts were not something I had been aware of during the literature review process. I believe these findings add another lens to the multifaceted ways in which school contexts influence principal leadership (Glanz, 2006).

### ***Practical application of spirituality in principal leadership***

#### *Professional tasks*

Spirituality in principal leadership was perceived by research participants as practical in nature. All the principal and teacher participants believed *their* spirituality was professionally useful to them on a daily basis. This reinforced claims in some of the literature reviewed that spirituality can have utility not only in the workplace generally (Fairholm 2000a), but also in educational contexts specifically (Gibbs, 2006). For example, Dent, Higgins and Wharff (2005, p.625), conducted an empirical review of eighty-seven scholarly articles on spirituality and leadership and concluded that, 'most either found or hypothesize a correlation between spirituality and productivity.' One of the reasons for spirituality's popularity in contemporary literature and research is because it is

widely believed to have practical relevance to individuals and organizational culture and effectiveness (Fry, 2003).

Principal participants sometimes experienced difficulty when asked to give an example to illustrate the practical application of spirituality in their leadership practice. I believe there are several possible explanations for this. For example one of the principals found the reflective journaling task at the end of a busy day quite onerous which may have contributed to the brevity of his responses. Spirituality was also difficult to isolate as a singular variable in their leadership, because they believed it was highly integrated. Another possibility was that participants were unfamiliar with having to think about their practice in this way and were still trying to make sense of the meaning of spirituality and not simply thinking of external behaviours as suggest by Moore and Casper, 2006).

The practical usefulness of spirituality is controversial in that what is meant by spirituality remains ontologically contested in literature. Culpit (2001, p. 8) says in his doctoral thesis on the spiritual development of children, 'There is a conundrum which can be most clearly seen in attempts to understand spirituality by studying spiritual experience. One cannot identify which experiences describe spirituality without pre-determining what spirituality is.' He goes on to argue that 'inescapably implicated in the meaning ascribed to these terms [*terms attempting to define spirituality*], are presumptions about the nature of the phenomenon described which rest on prior answers to ontological questions' (ibid. p. 9). That is, 'spirituality is one of those very difficult areas where semantics cannot be isolated from ontology and definitional clarity cannot be obtained apart from context from which meaning is derived' (ibid. p.9).

The findings of this case study do show that spirituality was believed to contribute towards day to day personal and school needs. These findings are also supported in the literature, for example by Fry & Matherly(2006) and Sanders, Hopkins & Geroy (2003). In addition Woods (2007) found that among 244 head-teachers in England, over 50% of participants acknowledged some kind of transcendent power which was believed to be helpful in their leadership practice. The practical nature of spirituality is also supported by some of the findings by Dent, Higgins and Wharff (2005, p. 639) who claim, 'Many of the authors contend that

spirituality empowered employees are more creative, more honest, stronger, more resilient, and more compassionate human beings.’ However, the findings from my study do not support Dent, Higgins and Wharff’s claim for superior performance as my study was not comparative and evaluative in its design. However the three principals perceived their spirituality as personally helpful to them in building relationships, being honest, showing humility and integrity as well as maintaining a healthy balanced work-life. Furthermore, the findings from the interviews with both teachers and principals showed that most participants believed spirituality in leadership contributed to the overall climate and culture of their schools.

Spirituality in leadership was also believed to be evident in dilemmas where the principals weighed up the care of the disruptive and disturbed child against the care of the teachers and other students. Coping with severely disruptive students and seeking to rehabilitate them into the life of the school seemed to be a significant context in which spirituality was perceived to be helpful. When the principals were dealing with student behaviour management issues they reminded themselves of their spiritually informed values and beliefs. They believed this led them to take a more measured, less reactive, holistic, and long term view of the child’s problems.

The practical application of spirituality did not guarantee successful or effective outcome. Each principal acknowledged there were times when they didn’t get everything right. However they emphasized the importance of endeavouring to repair and rebuild relationships that had been disaffected. In this way the praxis of spirituality in educational leadership contributed towards maintaining professional relationships. This finding into the practical applications of spirituality in principal leadership is believed to contribute to the literature reviewed which tended to focus only on the positive and dynamic nature of spirituality in leadership.

#### *Modelling leadership styles*

The findings of my study show that both principal and teacher participants’ descriptions of spirituality in principal leadership share common elements with a range of leadership styles. For example spirituality in principal leadership shares

commonality with discourse on servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1977, 1996), transformational leadership (Cooper, 2005), moral leadership (Sergiovanni, 1992) and relational leadership (Komives, Lucas & McMahan, 1998). Other leadership styles and theories such as faith-based leadership (Dantley, 2005), transcendental leadership (Sanders, Hopkins & Geroy, 2003), ethical leadership (Lashway, 1996) facilitative leadership (Conley & Goldman, 1994) and authentic leadership (Cashman, 1998) also share common elements. The reason for this commonality is that they share similar values and beliefs about organisational excellence and vision, quality caring relationships and leader integrity. Flemming (2005) also found in her doctoral study into spirituality in the practice of adult education leaders that they too modelled diverse leadership styles. This overlap between the characteristics of spirituality and leadership styles shows that spirituality in principal leadership is not one form of leadership but invites leaders to integrate their personal perspectives of spirituality into their preferred leadership style in appropriate and safe ways.

The findings also revealed that the principals in my study found modelling spirituality in their preferred leadership style was a challenging proposition to live up to. Principal participants described their sense of feeling vulnerable in terms of having to consistently and publically live up to the spirituality perspectives that they professed. Teacher participants said they looked critically at their principals but even more so when spirituality was espoused as part of their leadership style. Possible reasons behind this sense of vulnerability are the high public profile that principals have in their school communities, the link between spirituality and expectations of exemplary moral behaviour and because it represented the confluence of their deeply personal life-world with their professional life-world. Revealing inner personal world-views and beliefs made some of the principal participants in my case study feel extra vulnerable to criticism, and even opposition from people who did not agree with their personal perspectives of spirituality. A feeling of vulnerability associated with spirituality in leadership was also a finding reported by Ramirez (2009).

### *Resilience*

The principal participants perceived spirituality to contribute to the inner landscape of their lives, their emotional, spiritual, mental, physical and social

well-being, out of which the external decisions, relationships, actions and attitudes were derived. These findings are consistent with Flintham's (2003) research which explored the idea of spirituality in head-teachers having an *internal reservoir of hope*, a calm centre of the heart which contributes to their ability to act as an external reservoir of hope to the school communities in which they serve. This connection between spirituality and resilience was also affirmed by Woods' (2007, p. 148) research, where spiritual experiences were linked to a deep inner resource that not only shapes but 'sustains outward action.'

In my case study the principals believed spirituality contributed to their ability to maintain acceptable levels of professional performance, manage stressful situations and interpersonal problems, adapt to changing circumstances and needs, and recover from adversity. Spirituality in principal leadership contributing to resilience did not mean the principals were impervious to wear and tear that comes with the demanding and stressful job. But the findings from my case study suggest they perceived spirituality was helpful in the midst of weakness, uncertainty, weariness and dilemmas. This helpfulness was described in various ways. Some of teacher participants affirmed this link between spirituality in principal leadership and their sense of resilience in their principal. For example

*Yes, where there are times when we could stand down a student when she is prepared to use that example of love beyond, ... of putting our feelings aside and doing it for the student, knowing that they are created and that there is potential there ... her ability to care beyond what we are capable of, to have empathy beyond our means is probably where she comes in full play in that sense... and spirituality is the underpinning effect...she has like an almost supernatural ability to do that (YS, teacher Georgette, 2:4).*

In summary, I have discussed the main findings into the intrapersonal, contextual and practical meanings of spirituality in principal leadership. These complexity and inter-connectivity of these findings has been metaphorically described as 'woven threads and patterns of connections'. Participant principals understood spirituality as intentionally and responsively integrated, filtered, and fitted into professional practice. The findings also showed there were unique contextual influences within each school reciprocally affecting the principals' spirituality in leadership. These findings indicated that spirituality in principal leadership was

co-constructed, woven together by the social, cultural and educational input of many threads from many people.

All the participants believed in the practical nature of spirituality, that spirituality could be usefully applied to professional practice. The principals believed that their spirituality contributed to a wide range of practical tasks, their modelling of leadership styles and sense of resilience in the challenging and exciting role of being a school principal. Spirituality in principal leadership was not viewed by participants as one form of leadership rather the term described their professional integration of personal meanings of spirituality into their preferred leadership style for their own well-being and the well-being of their school communities. While some of the findings were similar the research literature reviewed the findings also provided some nuanced understandings into spirituality around the concepts of filtering and fitting, contextual influences, professional mistakes, and vulnerability.

### **Professional character, calibre and conduct**

‘By what means might spirituality in principal leadership be perceived to be influential’ was my third research question. The findings showed that participants perceived spirituality to be influential through the means of the quality of the professional character, calibre and conduct of leadership. Four inter-related sub-themes of integrity, quality care, professional competence, and appropriateness were described by participants in the findings along with three directional pathways through which the influence of spirituality could be experienced by teachers. Together these professional attributes and conduits contributed towards spirituality being perceived by teachers and then *received* into their professional practice.

Participants described these sub-themes in language that suggested they were co-requisites for spirituality in principal-ship to taken seriously and then have any likelihood of being applied to teaching. This finding links positively with Maxwell (1993, 2007), who says that leadership influence can come not only from competence, but through two higher levels. Maxwell describes these levels

as the quality of relationships with people within an organization and the attributes of the leader established over time. This second and highest level he calls the personhood of the leader.

The findings regarding integrity, quality care and competence reflected the literature reviewed. Understanding the need for appropriate expressions of spirituality was not identified previously through the literature. The multi-directional pathways in which spirituality was expressed by the principals and experienced by the teachers is believed to extend the literature into understanding how spirituality might be influential in school leadership.

### ***Personal and professional integrity***

The findings from this study reinforced the importance of integrity as a means of leadership influence generally (Maxwell, 2005; Robinson, 2007) and as a means by which spirituality might be influential specifically in educational contexts (Dixon, 2002; Hanley-Maxwell and Capper, 1999; Ramirez, 2009). The teachers' perspectives showed that integrity can *accommodate* from time to time imperfect decisions, personal problems and mistakes in professional judgment within principal's leadership. In other words, integrity did not equate with faultless leadership, but when mistakes were made it was important for the principals to acknowledge them, apologize if needed, avoid repeating them in future, and not to abuse their authority. Principal participants who did this described how breeches of integrity could be healed and restored. It was through actions such as honesty, humility and forgiveness that spirituality in leadership could be demonstrated and recognized as such. Some of the teacher participants also affirmed these findings.

The findings described a number of tensions that existed with spirituality and integrity in the professional life world of the principals. Some of the principal participants had to filter and fit their internalized perspectives of spirituality to external professional workplace situations and in doing so *veil* some of what they felt and/or believed. Secondly, some of the findings described that spirituality and integrity in principal leadership could be challenged by ethical dilemmas. For example, in order to solve one side of an issue involving misbehaviour of a

student, certain values or beliefs regarding the care of other students and teachers might need to be compromised.

### *Quality care*

Care for others was a commonly identified theme in the reviewed research into spirituality (e.g. Creighton, 1999; Dixon, 2002; Flintham, 2003; Wellman, Perkins & Wellman, 2009; Woods 2007), and in leadership literature generally (Robinson, 2007). This case study has reinforced that discourse by describing examples of quality care as well as providing insight into the spirituality informed reasons *why* principals cared. For example, some of the principals cared for their students and staff not only out of their sense of professional duty but because of their deeply held spirituality informed values for life and their belief in the importance of loving others. These findings were enriched through the inclusion of the teachers' views which affirmed most of the principals' comments about care. They also revealed some disagreement suggesting that consistent, equitable, quality care was a challenging task for principal leadership to maintain.

Some of the participants raised the question, does care necessarily equate with expressions of spirituality? What about caring principals who don't espouse spirituality as an integral dimension to their leadership. The findings in this case study suggested that care can be shaped by a range of factors such as personality, social-cultural experiences and expectations, professional ethical standards as well as spirituality. Spirituality did not mean care was necessarily better or more frequent, but it was believed by the principals and some of the teachers to contribute another dimension to the understanding of and ability to *care*. Spirituality may also provide particular beliefs about why care is needed.

### *Professional competence*

Influence is recognised in literature as psychologically complex (Cialdini, 1993; Maxwell, 2007) being affected in my study by such things as the receptivity of teacher participants, their motivation to change their teaching practice, timeliness of principal leadership actions and the perceived usefulness of what is modelled or facilitated by the principals (Scribner, 1998). The findings identified that

*spirituality* was perceived by participants to be influential when it was channelled through or complemented by professional competence. This was similar to the quantitative study by Wellman, Perkins and Wellman (2009) in which they reported, 'The results of this study revealed that spirituality and good leadership practices are correlated at a very significant level for the participants in the survey' (p. 3).

Principal participants in my study described their awareness that to be influential they had to demonstrate proven educational and administrative ability, sustained over time. This was consistent with the literature review which identified competence and influence as an expectation of the job description of principals (Primary Principals' Collective Agreement, 2004-2007) and vital for effective school management and development (Creemers and Reezigt, 1996; Hallinger and Heck, 1996; Water, Manzano and McNulty, 2003).

The findings showed that teachers' positive descriptions of their principal's professional competence linked with their positive descriptions of spirituality in their leadership. These teachers more readily mentioned transference of aspects of that spirituality modelled in leadership into their own practice. Where participant teachers described a harmonious school culture, they seemed to more readily describe influences related to spirituality in leadership. Teachers described a sense of confidence and trust that developed as they experienced the skills of their principals over an extended period of time. This finding is consistent with the close inter-woven nature of spirituality in leadership.

### ***Appropriateness of spirituality***

Appropriateness of spirituality was a theme I had not come across in the research literature reviewed. As a means by which spirituality in principal leadership might channel its influence towards teachers, appropriateness meant aligning expressions of spirituality with teacher and school expectations. Participants described spirituality in principal leadership more favourably when their perception of what they deemed spirituality to mean was able to be readily assimilated into their understanding of the term. Participants' descriptions of what was appropriate were guided by legal, moral, professional, and ethical

considerations. Crafted wisdom derived from professional experience, trial and error, and the unique contextual factors pertaining to each school community were also believed to be influential in decision making.

In this case study, appropriateness seemed to become an issue to participants around expressions of spirituality that were below the expectations of care and relational trust expected or too overtly identified with religio-spirituality beliefs (Moran & Curtis, 2004; Walker & McPhail, 2009). It was not religion per se that was the problem but the expressions of spirituality being pitched appropriately within the public school leadership role for the context and audience. For example participants described instances in the life of the school, where spirituality in the form of *karakia* (prayer) and participation in religious ceremonies or traditions was deemed *appropriate*, and were the principal not to behave in such ways or not to be affirming of such practices would have been socially-culturally, and professionally insensitive.

Appropriateness of spirituality in principal leadership in this sense seemed to a complex socially negotiated process. This was interpreted to mean that spirituality still retained connections with cultural and religious traditions in the wider school community. The challenge for participant principals was, knowing what was appropriate, when, and with whom. This quote from one of the teacher participants, expresses the subjective nature of appropriateness and its potential as a means or conduit for influencing teachers and their teaching.

*If it's a spirituality that I agree with, I guess I want it developed and encouraged... isn't that interesting. I guess if they have a different spiritual base or a different slant on their spirituality maybe I wouldn't... If it's something I agree with which are all those positive virtues and values, self-esteem building, co-operation and those sorts of ones...absolutely. But if it's something that goes against my values I guess... but that's like everybody isn't it? I guess I wouldn't want to see it (YS, teacher, Iris, 3:1).*

### ***Multi-directional pathways of influence***

The findings affirmed the literature reviewed (McEvoy, 1987; Rhoads, 2002; Southworth, 2002; Yong, 2002) that principal influence can be convoluted, multi-

directional, and even subtle. Three directional classifications of leadership influence on staff have been discussed by Southworth (2002), these being direct, mediated and reciprocal pathways of influence. The findings of my case study indicate that spirituality, as an integral dimension of principal leadership, can be experienced through multi-directional pathways that are often subtle and complex. For example the findings illustrate that spirituality in principal leadership was experienced directly through what the principals modelled in their words and actions. The findings also revealed that spirituality could be reciprocally experienced between principals and teachers. Teachers' spirituality could influence the principals' spirituality and vice-versa. In this way, teachers, especially those in distributed leadership positions, could become co-influential along with the principal on the culture and climate of the school.

Spirituality was also perceived by teachers to be mediated through their principals' provision of professional development and the maintenance of school culture and climate. The multi-directional pathways of influence were an important understanding to the lived experience of spirituality in this study, because they acknowledged the complex means by which the phenomenon might exert an effect on teachers and their teaching. This finding provides some explanation as to why spirituality in principal leadership is difficult to quantify (Giacalone, Jurkiewicz & Fry, 2003), even apart from the problems associated with definition.

In summary, this section of the discussion has focused on the findings pertaining to the research question, 'By what means might spirituality in principal leadership be perceived to be influential?' The findings describe five aspects of principal leadership through which the participants perceived spirituality to be influential. The findings within the sub-themes of integrity, quality care, competence, and appropriateness show that spirituality could be influential through the quality of the principals rather than through their positional power inherent in their school leadership roles. Multi-directional pathways highlights the complexity and at times convoluted ways that spirituality, integrated in principal leadership practice, might be experienced by teacher participants. Through these five means spirituality was perceived as co-dependent upon exemplary professional character

and conduct in order to be recognised in the first instance and then applied into teachers' practice.

The findings showed that teacher participants' need to experience integrity and quality care in leadership, were comparable to the claims in the literature reviewed. The importance of professional competence was consistent with my earlier findings into the integrated nature of spirituality. It would be incongruous for spirituality to be influential in dysfunctional principal leadership. Discussion of the diverse pathways through which *spirituality* may be received were not identified in the literature review process. I believe these findings provide some refined understanding of spirituality needing to be appropriate in principal leadership before being appropriated by teachers within the school organisation.

### **Variable influences of spirituality on teachers and teaching**

The findings discussed under this theme relate to my final research question, 'What influence might spirituality in principal leadership have on teachers and their teaching?' I believe the findings address this question fairly by showing that teacher participants' perception of the influence of spirituality in principal leadership varied. The reasons for this variation are complex, reflecting teacher participants' personal beliefs about spirituality, and the degree to which they perceived the presence of integrity, quality care, professional competence and appropriateness of spirituality in their principals' practice.

Fenwick and Lange (1998, p. 65) claimed spirituality can be used 'cruelly, perversely and exploitatively,' however I did not find any research to support that view. Most of the research literature tended to focus on the positive effects associated with spirituality in the workplace generally and in educational leadership specifically. The absence of variability of influence in the literature may be attributed to ethical complications of researching negative effects of leadership, and the absence of employee or teacher voice in the research designs. This gap in the literature informed my decision to include three teachers from each school context to be able to clarify the assumed effects of integrating spirituality into principal leadership with actual effects.

### *Positive effects on professional attitudes and practice*

The findings in my study showed that most teacher participants attributed positive emotional and professional effects to spirituality in principal leadership. These tentative findings were similar to the literature reviewed. For example, Wellman, Perkins and Wellman (2009, p. 2) reported that ‘leaders who scored high on spirituality also scored high on enabling others to act.’ Furthermore, Dent, Higgins and Wharff (2005, p. 627), say,

*Spirituality is believed to enhance organizational learning, unify and build communities, serve the need for connecting to others at work, and to work itself, and is a source of a healing harmonizing expression of compassion, wisdom, and connectedness that transcends all egocentric, socio-centric, or anthropocentric forms.*

The findings reinforced the literature reviewed that principals play a role in influencing teachers and their teaching (Creemers & Reezigt, 1996; Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Water, Marzano & McNully, 2003). Participant teachers found it challenging to apportion the amount of influence to spirituality in principal leadership as distinct from other leadership skills, characteristics and behaviour. This challenge reflected the fact that the influential characteristics of spirituality in leadership were believed by participants to be an integral part of both the leader and leadership. This lack of clarity with the influence of spirituality is consistent with the work by Dixon (2002) who researched five primary principals. Her findings showed that spirituality was believed by the principals to contribute towards relational connectivity, equity and integrity. But the causal significance of that influence of spirituality as opposed to the other foci of principal leadership which comprised her research was not discussed.

One of the significant features of my study was extending the research focus to include the voice of teachers. Participant teachers described differences between the principal’s perceptions of spirituality in leadership and the perceptions of what the teachers thought about spirituality in principal leadership. This was predicted from the literature review in terms of the pluralism that exists in society. However the teachers’ described how *they* felt about spirituality in principal leadership, how they received it, and what effect it had on them and their teaching.

The majority of the findings from the teacher participants suggested that spirituality when appropriately filtered and fitted to specific school contexts, and accompanied by competent professional leadership was perceived to be positively influential in a range of practical ways. This co-existence of spirituality with a range of other requisites meant that spirituality, as an agent of influence, was identified as a complementary dimension to principal leadership and not a single isolatable variable.

Many of the teacher participants perceived that the spirituality in their principals' leadership contributed towards the climate and culture of the school through its emphasis on quality relationships, caring values and a hope for the future. This affected the teachers' morale, sense of commitment and desire to remain at the school. Some teachers attributed the principal's efforts to improve the quality of the teaching and learning within the school, to the principal's spirituality. This was based on the teachers' perception of the principal's care toward the students.

As teachers experienced quality care from their principals and observed quality care from the principals towards difficult and disruptive students, the teachers became aware of the importance of care in their own teaching. The modelling of care by the principals encouraged the teachers to care likewise for the children in their classes. The effects of this aspect of spirituality in principal leadership were described by some teachers who said they endeavoured to make changes in their approaches to the management of difficult students and that they had become more aware of the holistic needs of children, not just reacting to their misbehaviour.

Several teacher participants explained how they knew that the spirituality of their principals was having a positive effect on them because they were able to reflect on principals they had worked with in the past who had lacked qualities of spirituality. These teachers said they knew what it had been like working for those previous principals and they had not liked it. These teachers therefore knew what positive and negative influence from principal leadership was like.

Some teachers described how their self-efficacy, their sense of confidence in their ability to perform and attain goals, was influenced by the fact that they shared some common values or spirituality perspectives with their principals. However there are many factors that can affect teacher feelings of confidence and purposefulness in their stressful and demanding roles. Spirituality may not be the only or most significant factor.

The predominance of the positive effects described by the teacher participants in my findings could be attributed to other factors. The semi-structured interview schedules did not intentionally seek out contrary or dissenting viewpoints and incidents. The teacher participants who volunteered for the research may have been pre-disposed towards a favourable interpretation of the subject. It would be less risky for participants to disclose positive descriptions of spirituality than if they were to openly criticise or been seen as judgmental toward their principal. These discussion points are supported by a comment from one of the teachers who spoke about the existence of some teachers on the staff at her school who 'didn't like' some aspects of one the principal's spirituality in leadership. The findings therefore are presented as tentative.

### *Ambivalence and uncertainty*

A feeling of ambivalence by teachers towards spirituality in principal leadership was not identified in the research literature reviewed. The literature did however mention ambivalence toward the subject of spirituality by the academic community. Tisdall (2003, p. 25) says, 'Perhaps the prior silence of the topic of spirituality in areas of academic and professional practice is due not only to the difficulty of defining spirituality, but also to the ambivalence of many who work in an academic world that has emphasized rationality and the scientific model for most of the 20th century.' The emerging discourse into spirituality tends to describe an optimistic assessment of spirituality in leadership and the workplace and to be conspicuously silent in terms of other types of responses. In this case study a few of the teacher participants described feelings of uncertainty regarding the presence or effects of the spirituality in principal leadership, even though all

three principals believed they integrated their spirituality into their leadership practice.

One explanation behind teacher participants' ambivalence towards spirituality in principal leadership may be related to some of the findings by Dent, Higgins and Wharff (2005, p. 628), that spirituality can be subtle and discreet or, it can be more active and responsive, thereby reinforcing the confused or uncertain perception of its presence in school based leadership. Another interpretation could be that participants' ambivalence may have been a way of declining to discuss concerns or problems associated with spirituality in principal leadership. Alternatively, ambivalence may relate to the lack of clarity in the participants minds about the meaning of spirituality. This may be one advantage behind approaching research into spirituality with a standardized framework such as the one used by Wellman, Perkins and Wellman, (2009) and Ramirez (2009).

#### ***Limiting and restricting effects of spirituality in principal leadership***

The literature reviewed presented spirituality as a phenomenon associated with positive attributes and outcomes (Fairholm, 2000; Flintham, 2003; Fenwick, 2005). One reason may be due to the ethical complications of researching spirituality in an evaluative way, thereby putting the relationships between principals and teachers at risk. My descriptive study affirmed these positive affects associated with spirituality but also provided discrepant examples of spirituality in principal-ship in which it was perceived by participant teachers to have limiting or restricting effects. This finding was not identified in my literature review.

Some of the teacher participants described a few situations whereby they believed spirituality in principal leadership or the inappropriate expression of it disaffected either themselves or other staff. For example one situation involved a principal's decision to enrol staff in a highly regarded professional development programme which negatively impacted on the morale due to the burden of afterschool hours required to attend the sessions. Another incident concerned a principal's desire to fundraise for a charitable cause in a developing country through the school annual gala as a way of modelling to the students the value of thinking of others who are

less fortunate. Although a laudable initiative, the way in which it was communicated disaffected the unity among the staff and resulted in the idea being dropped. The third incident involved the inclusion of Christian spiritual values in the school's weekly newsletter, which one of the teachers described as needing to be edited or toned down in order to be more broadly acceptable within the school community.

These findings regarding some limiting and restricting effects attributed to spirituality in principal leadership are not unexpected given that principals can and do make mistakes in professional judgment. However the full extent of these discrepant effects attributed to spirituality may not have been captured due to the fact that participants were more likely to be favourably disposed towards the topic. Staff with dissenting views towards the subject of spirituality in principal leadership may have felt ethically more vulnerable to participate.

The findings reveal that the causes behind leadership mistakes are often complex, and not necessarily intentional. More importantly the findings show that mistakes can afford important opportunities for the principals to integrate and demonstrate their spirituality in the reconciliation process through for example, humility, asking forgiveness and not taking offense. Mistakes worked through in this manner could become opportunities for the development of the principals' praxis of spirituality in leadership as they critically reflect on the issues and work through the issues with the people concerned.

The examples of negative effects attributed to spirituality in principal leadership appeared to me, as an outsider looking in on the case, to be short term, non-systemic and unintentional. There was no data provided by the teacher participants that their principals intentionally used spirituality in their leadership to abuse the rights of their professional colleagues. I believe the findings show the human fallible side of both leadership and spirituality within the contexts of my case study. It might also be argued that the findings illustrate a *lack* of spirituality. Considered together these findings provide nuanced insights into the influence of spirituality in principal leadership on teachers and their teaching.

## Summary

This chapter has critically discussed the findings from my qualitative case study inquiry into the meaning of spirituality in principal leadership within three public primary school contexts. The discussion has focused on interpreting the findings, and discussing their alignment or otherwise to the literature reviewed in chapter two. The discussion has shown that there were a number of findings consistent with the research examined in the literature review. For example, the integrated and intentional aspects of spirituality, the practical usefulness of spirituality with a range of professional tasks and its contribution to personal resilience. The findings on the co-requisite needs of integrity, quality care and professional competence also aligned with the literature reviewed.

The findings also describe a range of nuanced insights into spirituality in primary school leadership, and its effects on teachers. These insights pertain to filtering and fitting of spirituality into practice, the reciprocal influence of school contexts of principals' spirituality, the vulnerability of principals intentionally integrating spirituality into their preferred leadership style, the need for appropriate expressions of spirituality, multi-direction pathways of spirituality, teacher ambivalence toward spirituality, the existence of negative effects from spirituality in leadership and how these can become a valuable opportunity for improving the practice of spirituality in leadership.

Although the conclusions I developed from the findings are tentative I believe they do make a significant contribution to the literature into this emerging field of educational leadership. The inclusion of teacher participants, the undefined position taken on spirituality, and the fact that the findings reflect the lived experience of spirituality in principal leadership within three public primary school contexts is also significant.

Spirituality was described by participants as a phenomenon that they perceived to be complex with diverse personal and professional, social-cultural, religious, existential and philosophical meanings. Spirituality was not an easy subject for all participants to talk about. The first theme, 'making sense of life and making sense of living', provided a foundation from which I was able to build an

understanding of the meaning and lived experience of spirituality in principal leadership within the three school sites.

The second theme utilised a weaving metaphor to link together three complex sub-themes. The nature or intrinsic characteristics of spirituality in principal leadership were described as integrated, intentional, filtered and fitted, and yet practical. Spirituality in principal leadership was also shaped by the people associated with each school community, the traditions and culture associated with each school. Praxis was described by the principals as a reflexive, self-managed process operating within a range of professional tasks, the modelling of leadership styles and the pursuit of personal resilience. Together the nature, contextual factors and praxis of spirituality in principal leadership were metaphorically likened to multiple threads woven together to show patterns of relational connections in daily school life.

The means by which spirituality in principal leadership was perceived by participants to be influential on teachers was by the professional quality of leadership, identified as integrity, quality care, competence and appropriateness. These professional attributes relating to the character, calibre, and conduct of leadership, seemed to enable teachers to firstly perceive spirituality in their principal's leadership and then receive it. Spirituality in principal leadership was also experienced by teachers through multi-directional pathways, which were often convoluted, subtle and even reciprocal.

Teacher participants attributed varying influential effects to the spirituality in their principal's leadership. While the predominant influence described by teacher participants was positive, there were also discrepant effects with some examples of indifference or ambivalence. Variable effects of spirituality in principal leadership had not been identified in the literature review process. This finding was not unexpected given the diverse understandings towards this dimension of educational leadership. It also reflects the fact that principals, like all people, do make mistakes.

Spirituality was not described by participants as a guarantee of effective leadership. However the findings suggest that spirituality was perceived to be

present in the stress and dilemmas of leadership as one of a number of resources that the principals could draw on to help them move forward. Spirituality as an influential dimension of principal leadership is described in this case study as co-existing with other professional characteristics and skills. Appropriate expressions of spirituality in principal leadership were believed to be influential by all participants when co-existing with integrity, quality care, and professional competence.

Understanding the meaning of spirituality in principal leadership has been enriched by including the voice of teachers into the research design. Spirituality in principal leadership was co-constructed or shaped by a range of personal, contextual and situational factors unique to each school. It is a social phenomenon as much as an individual phenomenon. The perceived importance of sacred and secular world-views, beliefs, values and attitudes and how these were believed to inform and enable leadership action has also been discussed. For some participants spirituality was juxtaposed with religion, and for others it was not.

Teachers' perspectives showed that spirituality in principal-ship was perceived to be more influential through the quality of the character and conduct of the principals rather than through their espoused policies or position of authority. I believe the four key themes derived from the findings of my study make a constructive contribution to the growing body of research in New Zealand and internationally into this exciting and complex dimension of educational leadership.

## CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION

### Implications, limitations and recommendations

*It's from his inner beliefs of how he wants the world to be and he's taking the values of his home and how he wants his home to be and he's trying to create that community within his school... once again it's that being a good role model and walking the talk...and that's made a huge difference over the last few years  
(GT, teacher Abbey, 2:5).*

#### **Introduction.**

The above quote, from one of the teacher participants, highlights some of the exciting findings that have emerged from my study. This teacher describes spirituality in principal leadership as being connected to inner beliefs, world-views, personal values, professional behaviour, intentionality and integrity. The teacher also believes these aspects of the principal's spirituality to have contributed a significant and enduring effect upon the school community.

Why I wanted to research spirituality in principal leadership relates to my vocational background in primary teaching, teacher education, and who I am as a Christian. My Masters Degree research into principal leadership in teaching and learning motivated me to learn more about how teachers perceive and receive influence from their principals. From the outset of my research journey I have had a particular interest in the relationship between principals' spirituality and their professional praxis. Of secondary interest has been the influence if any, that spirituality in principal leadership might have on teachers and their teaching.

My review of the literature identified spirituality as a complex topic which evokes a wide range of personal, philosophical and professional responses. For some people spirituality is perceived to be meaningful to their lives and to be helpful in their workplace organisations, for others it is not. Spirituality has been discussed in various New Zealand educational reports, included some contemporary New Zealand curriculum documents, and it has been identified by the New Zealand Teachers Council in their code of ethics for registered teachers. As an academic topic, spirituality has received renewed interest over the past two decades. The reason for this interest is unclear but may reflect the use of a broader, humanistic

conceptualisation of the term and the importance of values and holistic wellbeing to society generally.

My over-arching research question was, ‘What might the phenomenon of spirituality in principal leadership and its influence on teachers and teaching be perceived to mean in three public primary school contexts?’ One of the challenges with the term spirituality, as posited in the literature review, was its definition. I decided on an undefined position regarding the term because I wanted to explore my underlying research question from the lived experiences of my participants. I chose a qualitative and constructivist research paradigm with applied phenomenological perspectives because such a methodology best suited my research objectives.

My research design involved fieldwork spread over a one year period involving twelve participants from three schools. A singular descriptive case study method was chosen to minimize the ethical problem of evaluating one school against another. The data was mainly derived from semi-structured interviews and supported to a lesser extent by overt, non-participant observations and principal reflective journals. This approach enabled me to triangulate and enhance the trustworthiness of the data.

In this final chapter I bring to the surface the salient points contained within the body of the thesis. It is structured into three sections. Firstly I summarize the key findings and their possible contribution to the emerging literature. I then discuss two sets of implications; one for principal leadership theory and practice, the other for teacher education. Finally, I identify several limitations and suggest an opportunity for further research.

## **Summary of the key findings**

### ***Making sense of life and making sense of living***

The findings reflected New Zealand’s pluralistic society. Participants interpreted spirituality in diverse ways which were believed to help them make sense of life

and living. All of the participants shared spirituality informed beliefs and values which they believed were applicable to their public primary school contexts.

- *Diversity of spirituality:* The principal and teacher participants' personal meanings of spirituality reflected a broad spectrum of non-religious, religious, agnostic, cultural, and transcendent perspectives. In some cases these perspectives reflected humanistic views, Maori spiritual traditions, and Christian teachings. Some of the participants held strongly individualistic views about spirituality. Participants made meaning of spirituality through subjective and socially constructed ways, which were shaped and re-shaped by inter-connected life experiences. Spirituality was associated with connectedness, meaning making and a desire to have an authentic alignment between their beliefs, moral-values, attitudes and professional actions.
- *Knowledge of spirituality:* Participants' knowledge of spirituality was constructed by perceptual evidence derived from experiences, and knowledge derived through faith and intuition. Some participants found spirituality a difficult concept to clearly and confidently explain. It was not a familiar topic of discussion in the three public primary school settings.
- *Perception of spirituality:* Participants perceived spirituality as an innate human phenomenon, something that could be personally developed between oneself and others. Participants believed spirituality could be observed through people's words and actions. They also believed spirituality could be critically reflected upon and evaluated in terms of its appropriateness or goodness.
- *Application of spirituality:* A key finding was that all participants believed their personal views of spirituality had meaningful application to their professional practice. These applications included commonly held values, such as honesty, care, justice, and integrity. Spirituality could also be applied to understanding personal identity and worth, moral behaviour, vocational passion, purpose, and a positive outlook towards the future.

### *Woven threads and patterns of connections*

This study shows that the lived experience of spirituality in principal leadership at the three schools was complex, involving intrapersonal, contextual and practical meanings woven together through daily reflective, relational and responsive actions.

- *Integral dimension of principal leadership:* Principal participants described their personal meanings of spirituality as deeply embedded into their professional leadership lives. They believed spirituality to be internalised and integral to who they are, permeating their thinking, feelings, motivations and general well-being.
- *Intentionality of spirituality in principal leadership:* This study found that spirituality in principal leadership reflected the principals' intentionality to integrate their personal meanings of spirituality into their professional practice. The principals described their conscious discipline of self-monitoring, reflection, and in some cases prayer and the reading of a sacred text, to ensure beliefs and values were aligned with their leadership practice. However the principals also believed their spirituality was present at a sub-conscious level, due to their beliefs and values being deeply integrated into their lives, habits of mind and behaviour.
- *Filtering and fitting of spirituality in principal leadership:* A key finding from this study was that principal participants believed their personal internalized meanings of spirituality underwent a self-regulated, responsive, cognitive and intuitive, filtering and fitting process in which their expressions of spirituality were made professionally appropriate to their school contexts. Guiding this filtering and fitting process was their desire to walk with personal integrity true to their inner beliefs and values. All principals were aware of bringing their respective meanings of spirituality into their school leadership in such a way that it maintained a cohesive, relational and inclusive school community.
- *Influence of school context on spirituality in principal leadership:* The three school contexts, while secular in character, contained elements of spirituality. The principals described various relational, cultural and management situations within the life of their schools that provided opportunities, expectations and limitations for their spirituality informed

beliefs and values to be integrated into leadership practice. For example a school fundraising event in which some of the profits were to be gifted to World Vision for an aid project in a developing nation, Maori cultural practices such a karakia (prayers), and Christian programmes such as Cool bananas and Bible in Schools. The principals believed their spirituality was reciprocally influenced towards greater expressions of care, social justice, patience and compassion through interaction with students, parents/caregivers and teachers in their school communities. As one principal said as a result of interacting with the students at his school, ‘I think over the last six-seven years I’ve developed more heart for children (BS, Principal, 2:4).’

- *Practical application of spirituality in principal leadership:* The principals believed their personal meanings of spirituality were practically applied within their leadership. Their spirituality contributed to their ability to work through student behaviour dilemmas by taking a more measured, less reactive, holistic, and long term view of the child’s needs, and the capacity of the school. The principals believed their spirituality perspectives assisted with their thinking and action associated with providing professional development, building school climate, expressing positive communication, articulating high expectations, and managing resources and people. These findings were endorsed by many of the teacher participants.

The principals also believed their spirituality helped them model characteristics of servant, transformational, relational, and moral leadership styles. They felt their spirituality informed beliefs and values assisted them to be authentic, caring, humble, honest and forgiving, to walk the talk, and not be hypocritical. The principals explained how their spirituality helped them work through mistakes in decision making, assisting them rebuild broken relationships by acknowledging error in judgment, and making appropriate amends for their actions.

Furthermore, the findings showed that the principals believed their spirituality assisted them to remain buoyant amidst the pressure of the job, and to come back the next day refreshed. This was explained by their

practice of spiritual disciplines such as prayer or by applying spiritual values such as having a work-life balance. For example one principal said, 'It [spirituality] gives me strength at times when I'm wondering if I can continue ... But from a Christian perspective ... I go home at the end of the day and sometimes I feel completely drained out but through prayer and being able to give these things to God I come back the next day afresh' (GT, principal, 3:3).

### ***Professional character, calibre, and conduct***

A key finding in this study was that all stakeholders agreed that integrity, quality care, professional competence and appropriate expressions of spirituality needed to co-exist in principal leadership, in order for spirituality to be perceived and received by teachers as influential to their practice. Spirituality in principal leadership could also be experienced by teacher participants in a number of ways.

- *Personal and professional integrity:* Teacher participants perceived their principals' spirituality as influential based on the level of congruence between the way each principal talked and walked in their leadership practice. Teachers explained that spirituality in principal leadership would not be influential under conditions of hypocrisy. 'We would suss him out in a day if he had no integrity or he didn't actually believe in what he was spouting... it's got to be right through... it's got to be a true part of yourself or don't do it.'(GT, teacher Bonny, 3:5).
- *Quality care:* Teacher participants who felt valued by their principals and felt their principals' cared about them personally and professionally, tended to speak more favourably about spirituality in principal leadership. Teacher participants described a range of influential principal behaviours such showing compassion and empathy, providing timely and practical support, and expressing aroha or love. Teacher participants who experienced these behaviours from their principals affirmed the influential effect of their principal's spirituality in leadership.
- *Professional competence:* Teacher participants' perceptions of the level of competence in their principal's leadership, were closely related to their perceptions of spirituality in their principal's leadership. Teacher

participants who felt their principal had established credibility over time, was trustworthy, and had built good staff relationships were more likely to view their principal's spirituality as positively influential. Most participants viewed spirituality in principal leadership as an integral dimension of leadership. Therefore teachers who felt concerned over the competence of their principal tended to be more uncertain or ambivalent towards their principal's spirituality.

- *Appropriateness of spirituality:* All the participants believed spirituality needed to be appropriately expressed in principal leadership if it was likely to be influential. Appropriateness was a subjective judgment, guided by standards of professional practice, the secular inclusive nature of the public school institutions, and the situational context at hand. Appropriate expressions of spirituality included educational beliefs, values, attitudes and actions that were honest, caring, positive, and just. On a few occasions some of the principals incorporated personal religious perspectives of spirituality into decisions, actions and personal conversations in ways that were deemed inappropriate by some teacher participants.
- *Multi-directional pathways of influence:* Spirituality in principal leadership could be experienced by teacher participants through direct, indirect, and reciprocal ways. These pathways could be complex and convoluted, being mediated through other staff, programmes, and policies. For example teacher participants described how they experienced the influence of their principal's spirituality indirectly through the climate and culture of their schools. Teacher participants also experienced spirituality in principal leadership directly and reciprocally through one-to-one conversations and shared professional experiences.

### ***Variable influence of spirituality in principal leadership***

Teacher participants identified a variety of effects from spirituality in principal leadership. Most teacher participants attributed spirituality in principal leadership with contributing to improvements in their feelings and some aspects of their professional practice. Some teacher participants described ambivalent or negative feelings related to spirituality in their principal's leadership. The findings also

showed that it was difficult for participants to determine the significance of the influence attributed to spirituality as opposed to other leadership characteristics and skills.

- *Positive effects on professional attitudes and practice:* Most teacher participants attributed spirituality in principal leadership with positively influencing their morale and self-efficacy. Some teacher participants attributed improvements in their own professional attitudes and management of children to the influential behaviour of their principals. These improvements included an increased awareness of and practice of care, a quality that some of the teacher participants had identified with their principal's spirituality. Several teachers believed their commitment to teaching and employment retention was indirectly influenced through the positive effect of their principal's spirituality on school climate and culture.
- *Ambivalence and uncertainty towards spirituality in principal leadership:* A few teacher participants were ambivalent and uncertain about whether spirituality in principal leadership had had any tangible influence on their professional practice. The reasons given by teachers varied. A few of the explanations related to their uncertainty about the concept of spirituality. Some teacher participants expressed uncertainty with attributing influence to spirituality alone as opposed to other skills and characteristics of principal leadership.
- *Limiting and restricting effects of spirituality in principal leadership:* A few teacher participants described negative feelings from spirituality in principal leadership. These teachers identified a few critical incidents in which their principals inappropriately integrated their personal religious meanings of spirituality into their professional practice. There was no evidence of sustained systemic negative effects on teachers attributed to the spirituality of the principals in their leadership.

## **Implications for policy and practice**

The findings showed that participants held diverse perspectives of spirituality as well as sharing many aspects in common. Participants were able to work together while holding different cultural, philosophical, non-religious and religious beliefs about spirituality. The principal participants reported that their spirituality was reciprocally influenced by their school contexts and each principal believed their spirituality assisted them with a range of tasks, modelling leadership styles, and maintaining resilience. Most of the teacher participants attributed positive effects to spirituality in principal leadership when spirituality was appropriately expressed and accompanied by integrity, quality care, and professional competence.

Woods (2007) says, 'If spiritual experience is a part of the practice of leadership, it has to be part of the theory of leadership... Existing models of leadership need to take into account the capacity for transcendent, spiritual experience as a dimension of educational leadership.'(p. 152). My findings support this comment by Woods and suggest several implications for principal education providers, principals and aspiring principals, as well as implications for teachers and educational policy development.

### ***Implications for principal education providers, principals and aspiring principals***

Firstly, principal educators, principals and aspiring principals might find it useful to explore spirituality as a dimension of school leadership. In doing so they might examine professional beliefs, values, attitudes and skills associated with spirituality that would be appropriate and influential in their leadership. Principals might find spirituality useful as a learning tool or lens to critically reflect on their leadership practice. Spirituality may help educational leaders to understand their school contexts and assist them with their practical tasks, enact their preferred leadership style, and maintain personal resilience. Spirituality might assist principals and aspiring principals to model school values, maintain caring relationships, and resolve management problems. Woods (2007,) says from her research, 'There are clear implications for continuing professional

development for school leaders. One of the challenges is to legitimise spirituality and spiritual experience as centrally important aspects of the professional life of educational leaders generally.’(p. 152).

Secondly, principals’ leadership practice might benefit from exploring the elements of spirituality already present within their school organisations, programmes and diverse student cultures. For example principals might identify and reflect on the opportunities, challenges and limitations associated spirituality in their school via the values component within the New Zealand curriculum (2007). Principals might encourage discussion into the ways in which spirituality contributes to organisational effectiveness (Fairholm, 2000), and how organisational effectiveness might be improved through staff integrating spirituality into policies and practice. Exploring spirituality in these ways may lead to improvements in the way the values espoused by the school are lived out. Exploring spirituality in the school context might also help foster tolerance and respect for diverse cultures, and lead to further inquiry *about* spirituality through the social science curriculum. Dent, Higgins and Wharff (2005, p. 640), say, ‘With respect to whether the concept [of spirituality] is an individual or collective phenomenon (or both), the vast majority of the literature suggests that there is no reason, at this point, to assume that it might not be both.’

The third implication from my study is that principals and aspiring principals might benefit from learning about spiritual well-being, a related concept to spirituality. This is based on the fact that spiritual well-being is included as a learning area in the health strand of the New Zealand curriculum (2007). Registered teachers are also required by the New Zealand Teachers Council (2007) code of ethics, to ensure they *promote* the spiritual well-being of their students. Principals could examine literature and invite discussion within their school communities about the meanings people hold about spiritual well-being. If principals become better informed about spiritual well-being it might enable them to encourage teaching and learning within this area of the health curriculum. Several writers cited in my literature review advocated that the school learning environment is the logical place for facilitating inquiry into existential questions, and for developing skills to analyse and evaluate social justice issues in non-partisan and inclusive ways (Dantley, 2005; Starratt, 2003). Principals who

promote learning experiences in spiritual well-being may find that it helps students make meaning out of life and living, contributing to their sense of identity, purpose and vision for the future, thereby reducing antisocial behaviour. Teachers might promote the spiritual well-being of their students more effectively if they were able to observe spiritual well-being in their principal's leadership practice.

The fourth implication is that principals desiring to integrate spirituality into their leadership need to proceed cautiously, consulting widely and inclusively. Learning *about* spirituality, and *how* to express spirituality appropriately within a pluralistic public school context would be their focus, rather than learning to promote a particular perspective of spirituality. This implication arises from my findings in which some of the teacher participants experienced negative feelings from inappropriate expressions of spirituality in principal leadership. One teacher participant said she was doubtful that spirituality should be promoted in principalship, especially if linked with religio-spirituality perspectives which could become divisive within the school community. English et al. (2003), say, 'When introducing spirituality into education, there is always a potential for conflict when the organization's vision conflicts with the educator's vision of what is ethical and right' (p. 127). From a broader workplace perspective, there are two essential questions that need to be asked, 'Whose interests are being served? And, is the organisation trying to colonize the spirituality of the worker' (English et al., 2003, p. 131).

### ***Implications for teacher education, teachers and educational policy***

Teacher participants' believed their perspectives of spirituality were relevant to their teaching practice. For example, 'Spirituality means... that there is a purpose to life... That's why I teach... to bring out the best in others' (YS, teacher Iris, 1:1). It's [spirituality] empowering the child by letting them know where they've come from, who they are, why they are here ... It's called whakamana'. (YS, teacher Hemi, 1:2). The findings showed that teachers were perceptive of spirituality in principal leadership, able to evaluate it, and be influenced by it in various ways. These effects of spirituality in principal leadership included expanded approaches to management practice, improved morale, enhanced self-

efficacy and increased awareness and practice of care. The literature review also highlighted expectations that teachers promote the spiritual well-being of their students (NZ curriculum, 2007; NZTC Code of Ethics for Registered Teachers, 2007).

These findings from my study have implications for pre-service and in-service teacher education (Gibbs, 2006; Bethlehem Tertiary Institute, 2005). Firstly, a course could be developed that invites people to explore their own spirituality and the spirituality of others by discussing research literature and critically reflecting on their personal and professional experiences. Secondly, teachers could discuss appropriate ways to promote the spiritual well-being of culturally diverse students within a range of public schools, as well as students within integrated special character schools. Thirdly, teachers could share and critique topics and techniques for encouraging children to learn about spiritual well-being through the life of the school and the integrated curriculum. Woods (2007), identified that spirituality does not reside only in leadership, but in teachers as well. Her argument is that leadership is distributed within schools and therefore spirituality ought to be widely recognised within educational settings enabling ‘people to work together to raise one another’s awareness towards higher ethical purposes and to the importance of working for the achievement of those in the life of the organisation.’ (p. 152).

### **Limitations of the study**

My thesis took an undefined or open position on spirituality. My over-arching research question was, ‘What might the phenomenon of spirituality in principal leadership and its influence on teachers and teaching be perceived to mean, in three public primary school contexts?’ My qualitative descriptive case study field work involved twelve participants, three principals and nine teachers from three public primary schools in one region of the North Island of New Zealand. The trustworthiness of the findings in terms of their credibility and dependability (Bryman, 2001; Silverman, 2001), is underpinned by the triangulated research design in which data was gathered in three phases across a one year period from four participants within each of the three school sites. The trustworthiness of the

findings is also supported by my thorough inductive data analysis process, which involved carefully examining the transcripts for understanding of my research questions and the identification of key themes and sub-themes. The singular descriptive case study strategy was robust for the purpose of understanding the lived experience of spirituality in principal leadership and exploring my research questions. I enhanced the richness of the data by including three schools into the singular case study strategy.

The findings identified that spirituality was believed to be helpful to the principals in various practical tasks, the modelling of leadership styles and in maintaining resilience. The study also showed that spirituality was able to influence teachers in a variety of ways. These influences tended to be positive when spirituality in principal leadership was accompanied by integrity, quality care, appropriateness and professional competence. A limitation with these findings is that it remains unclear as to the significance spirituality contributed to principal leadership influence on the teacher participants. Participants found ascribing significance to spirituality difficult because spirituality was believed to be integrated into principal leadership, and because both spirituality and influence are complex social phenomena.

The online reflective journal and the overt non-participant observations were not as effective as I had envisaged. Two of the principals found the journaling exercise quite time consuming and difficult to complete at the end of a busy day's work. Making the reflective journal simpler, focusing on one or two significant incidents of spirituality in their leadership each day, could have been a more effective approach to the use of this instrument.

The overt non-participant observations of the principals helped me to understand the school contexts in which the principals worked and the way the principals operated in the circumstances to which I was invited. The observations were however limited to approximately one hour's duration and limited in terms of what was suitable for me as researcher to observe, for ethical and practical reasons. Therefore the observations were not a comprehensive coverage of the range of activities that occupied the principals' busy schedules.

Some writers believe workplace spirituality is measurable but there are others who believe it is not possible because many aspects of spirituality such as emotions, values and beliefs are not physical entities that can be empirically measured (Cacioppe, 2000; Fornaciari & Dean, 2001; Waddock, 1999). Dent, Higgins and Wharff (2005, p. 626), in their empirical study of definitions, distinctions and embedded assumptions say, 'Spirituality is addressed through several paradigms.' My interpretive constructivist paradigm, discussed in chapter three, implicitly recognises the subjective nature of my research into the phenomenon of spirituality in principal leadership. The research design and data gathered were triangulated to offset criticisms of subjectivity with qualitative research. Nevertheless, participants' perceptions of spirituality, my selection of follow up questions during interviews, my lens through which I observed spirituality in principal leadership and my analysis of the transcripts, inevitably contain elements of subjectivity.

The findings therefore are limited, being a co-construction of the interpretations of the participants and myself as researcher. Laverly (2003, p. 8) says, 'the biases and assumptions of the researcher are not bracketed or set aside, but rather are embedded as essential to the interpretive process.' The reader therefore should take into account my own professional profile reiterated at the beginning of this chapter and the influence of researcher' pre-suppositions around the complex subject of spirituality discussed in the literature review (Benefiel 2005; Fraser, 2007; Kurtz, 1973; McKay, 2004; Van Dusen, 2005; Watson, 2000).

In summary, the findings, as with all qualitative research, are not generalizable to statistical populations, being a non-representative sample within the public compulsory school sector. Although the findings are limited to the contexts studied they may be useful for developing theoretical propositions into spirituality in educational leadership (Berg, 1998; Fry, 2005; van Manen, 1997). Furthermore, the conclusions derived from the findings are tentative but they provide a rich understanding of the contexts studied. Readers are advised to take these limitations into account when drawing their own conclusions.

## **Recommendations for further research**

It is not uncommon for social science research to uncover other lines of inquiry that weren't conceived at the beginning of the process (Tolich and Davidson, 1999). In this section I recommend research into a range of primary school contexts that is focused on teachers' spirituality.

### ***Developing teachers' spirituality and exploring its influence in school organisations***

Based on the findings of my study, I recommend further research might be conducted into exploring the meaning of *teachers' spirituality* within the primary school sector of education in New Zealand. This research could explore the hypothesis that teachers are not only able to be influenced by the spirituality of their principals but are themselves active agents in developing and integrating spirituality perspectives into their professional practice. This hypothesis developed in my thinking from the interviews with teacher participants whereby they described what spirituality meant to them. One of the teachers said she would behave with integrity according to her own beliefs and values irrespective of what the principal modelled. Other teacher participants explained that their spirituality shaped their professional practice in terms of guiding their moral behaviour, providing purpose, helping them to be relational, motivating them to go the extra mile with children, and encouraging their acceptance of all children.

Primary teachers comprise a broad field for educational research. I would recommend exploring teachers' spirituality across a range of primary schools, and not limiting the study to English medium public schools only. This would enrich the findings by including private and integrated schools, as well as te kura kaupapa Maori schools. For example, in my literature review, I identified the New Zealand Association for Christian Schools (NZACS) as an under-researched subsection of the private and integrated school sector in New Zealand. Currently, NZACS has 57 schools and 2 tertiary institutions in its membership, spread from Northland to Otago involving approximately 13,000 students. This association comprises a significant number of schools that intentionally include Christian spirituality perspectives into their leadership and teaching.

Teachers' spirituality could be conducted through an action-research methodology if there was already an overt focus on spirituality within the culture and organization of the school. Action research invites individuals and teams to examine and critically reflect on their community of practice with a view towards improvement. Action research is not dependent on an outsider looking in but can be owned by participants within their school contexts. Having teachers critically explore the phenomenon of spirituality themselves, gather a variety of evidence, collegially interpret their findings and enact changes, could provide rich insights into the praxis teachers' spirituality in school contexts. Such an approach could combine research with meaningful teacher professional development in a least intrusive manner.

## **Conclusion**

My research journey focused on the exciting and challenging subject of spirituality in principal leadership, an under-researched topic of renewed interest in educational leadership literature. My main research question was, 'What might the phenomenon of spirituality in principal leadership and its influence on teachers and teaching be perceived to mean in three public primary school contexts? I approached the field work from an undefined or open position which allowed me to focus on the lived reality of spirituality as participants perceived it. This was appropriate for my singular, multi-site case study and my interpretive constructivist methodology. The research design was triangulated through recruiting three principals and nine teachers from three institutions and the use of three data gathering instruments which were repeated across a year period. These features of the research process enhanced the trustworthiness of the data.

The significance of my research is threefold. Firstly, I am not aware of any similar qualitative, case study literature in New Zealand or overseas that specifically focuses on spirituality in principal leadership within three, public primary school sites, and includes the voice of teachers. Secondly, my thesis contributes to the body of knowledge on educational leadership in New Zealand by showing that the three principal participants believed their spirituality was helpful in performing a

range of professional tasks, modelling leadership styles and maintaining personal resilience. Thirdly, the findings are significant because they show that spirituality in principal leadership when expressed appropriately and accompanied by integrity, quality care and professional competence, can positively influence teachers and their teaching.

My findings also show several nuanced meanings into educational leadership by describing how principal participants' intentionally integrated their spirituality into their practice, filtering and fitting it in response to opportunities, expectations and limitations within their school situations. This was a complex cognitive and intuitive process drawing on professional experience, trial and error, and critical reflection and discernment. Metaphorically speaking, these findings into the praxis of spirituality in principal leadership were like woven threads forming patterns of relational connections.

Participants described their perspectives of spirituality as complex, eclectic and syncretic, reflecting New Zealand's pluralistic society. Their descriptions included non-religious and humanistic ideas, cultural traditions, and Christian religious teachings. The meanings participants ascribed to spirituality were deeply personal, socially constructed, shaped and reshaped by their life experiences. These meanings included natural and supernatural world-views, interpersonal and transcendent connectedness, personal identity, meaning making about life and a desire to authentically align beliefs, moral-values, and attitudes, with professional behaviour. The scope of these meanings described by my participants was profound and I categorised them accordingly as, 'Making sense of life and making sense of living.'

Most of the teacher participants were able to describe various emotional and practical effects which they believed could be attributed to spirituality in principal leadership. Most of these effects were positive. Some effects were conveyed directly as they observed their principals' way of working with children, parents and staff. Some effects were more indirect or mediated through the perceived influence of the principal's spirituality on the climate and culture of the school.

My study also showed some new insights into the effects of spirituality in educational leadership which I was not aware of during the literature review process. For example, three teacher participants described ambivalent feelings or short term negative effects which they attributed in part to the spirituality of their principals. These findings showed that spirituality in principal leadership could be inappropriately expressed and that spirituality was not easily distinguished by some teachers from other aspects of leadership. These findings also showed that the principals were not beyond making mistakes. Mistakes with spirituality in principal leadership were described by participants as valuable opportunities to demonstrate integrity and care in the process of restoring broken relationships.

I believe the findings from my study will be of interest to primary school principals and aspiring principals for whom spirituality is already an intentional dimension of their professional practice. It will also be of interest those who are thinking about exploring spirituality in school leadership. I believe my thesis is relevant to primary school contexts because it relates to the character of principals and their influence on teachers, both of which are important and complex issues. Spirituality in principal leadership also relates to discourse into school cultures, school values, behaviour management practices and the pastoral care of staff and students. Furthermore, spirituality is related to spiritual well-being which is included in the New Zealand Curriculum (2007) under health education and in the New Zealand Teachers Council (2007) code of ethics for registered teachers in regard to their care of students.

I believe the main implication from the findings of my study is that primary school principals and school principal educators might find it helpful to explore spirituality as a dimension of leadership to help them better understand school learning communities. Learning about spirituality in leadership, spiritual well-being and spiritual safety in school contexts may provide additional learning tools or lenses through which principals can critically reflect on and develop their professional practice. Another implication arising from my findings is that principals wishing to explore spirituality ought to proceed cautiously, consulting widely and inclusively because spirituality is a controversial topic, especially in terms of its association with religious meanings.

Finally, spirituality *in* principal leadership is not one form of leadership but invites principals to integrate personal meanings of spirituality into their preferred leadership practice in appropriate ways for their own well-being and the well-being of everyone in their school community. I bring my thesis to a close by leaving with the reader a thought provoking quote by Tisdell (2001, p. 2), a professor of education and an educational researcher who says,

*Spirituality is one of the ways people construct knowledge and meaning. It works in consort with the affective, the rational or cognitive, and the unconscious and symbolic domains. To ignore it, particularly in how it relates to teaching for personal and social transformation, is to ignore an important aspect of human experience and avenue of learning and meaning – making.'*

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1: Ethics approval

Dean's Office  
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THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**WAIKATO**  
*Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato*

#### MEMORANDUM

**To:** Alaster Gibson  
**Cc:** Associate Professor Jan Robertson

**From:** Dr Rosemary De Luca  
Chairperson for School of Education Research Ethics Committee

**Date:** Monday 29 May 2006

**Subject:** Research Ethics Approval

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The School of Education Research Ethics Committee considered your revised application for ethical approval for the research proposal:

#### **Spirituality in principal leadership and its influence on teachers and teaching**

I am pleased to advise that this revised application has received ethical approval.

The Committee wishes you all the best with your research.

**Dr Rosemary De Luca**  
**Chairperson**  
**School of Education Research Ethics Committee**

**Appendix 2:** Invitation to principals in State schools to participate in the research.

Principal  
Address

Date

**RE: INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH**

Dear

This letter invites you to participate in my research. My name is Alaster Gibson, and I am enrolled at Waikato University in the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD). My research topic is inquiring into the relatively new and exciting field of *‘Spirituality in principal leadership and its influence on teachers and teaching.’*

I am seeking four principals from a range of primary school contexts whose spirituality may or may not have a religious affiliation. I also require the participation of three teachers from each school. I am intentionally leaving the term ‘spirituality’ undefined, so as to be inclusive of any principal/teacher desiring to be part of this research. Therefore any principal for whom ‘spirituality’ is considered to be an important part of who they are as a person and of the way they engage in principal leadership is sincerely invited to express interest by filling out the form below and returning it in the self-addressed envelope.

This research is designed as a *descriptive* case study of the phenomenon of spirituality. It is not an evaluative study of one school against another. The identity of all participants and the respective schools will be kept strictly confidential and be referred to by pseudonyms in any subsequent reports.

Principal participants will be involved in only three 50 minute interviews (one per term for three terms), a reflective journaling activity (only 2 ½ hours per term for three terms) and some observations by the researcher during the course of a few normal school activities such as a staff meeting and an assembly.

The journaling will involve making five, end-of- the-day reflective entries on an electronic template provided, once a term, over a three term period. At the end of each week, the journal material can be easily emailed back to the researcher for analysis.

Interviews will be audio-recorded, transcribed, then returned for correcting, deleting and editing. A professional typist, who will sign a statement of confidentiality, will do the transcription and you will be informed of the name of that person at our interviews. All data will be coded so your name will not be used. Pseudonyms will be used in all reporting to maintain your anonymity.

The observations will involve the researcher accompanying the principal in an unobtrusive manner during the course of some normal school activities to observe first hand the phenomenon of spirituality in principal leadership and its influence on teachers and teaching. No data will be recorded concerning students at the

school. Consent from teaching staff in general will be sought for this activity. Relevant sections of any field notes will be made available to principals and any affected teacher for their approval.

If more than four principals express a desire to participate the researcher will select participants guided by the following criteria. (i) Principal's length of experience and tenure at current school (ii) Type of school, such as roll size, location rural/suburban/ urban. The intention with these factors is to be able to include a balanced representation among the four participating principals to hopefully enrich the descriptive data for this research project. If the selection process is required, another letter will be sent thanking the unsuccessful principals for their willingness to participate. Once the principals have been selected and notified by letter, the researcher will proceed to obtain informed consent from their respective Boards of Trustees, then their staff through a letter similar to this one.

Three teachers will also be sought from each school to participate in this research. They will only be involved in three 50 minute interviews (one per term, spread over three terms) inviting them to comment on how they perceive spirituality in principal leadership to be influencing them as teachers personally and their professional practice of teaching. Should more than three teachers volunteer, then a selection will be made by the researcher based on the following criteria. (i) A spread of teachers across the junior, middle and senior areas of the school. (ii) A balance of gender. (iii) A balance of experience and length of time having worked with the principal.

Please note that as a participant you will be able to withdraw from this research without any consequences at any time up until the beginning of the second round of interviews (the same applies to participating teachers), and that such action will not unduly affect the research. Should withdrawal from this research be necessary please contact the researcher by phone or email as per details below. Any information you give as part of this research will be stored in a secure place and held indefinitely in accordance with University of Waikato requirements. As such it will remain strictly confidential to the researcher, his supervisors and examiners, and be used only for the purposes of the subsequent thesis and appropriate academic publications. As far as possible, the researcher will take all reasonable steps to safeguard the anonymity of all principals, teachers and their schools throughout the research process and in any subsequent publications.

Finally, should you have any further questions or in the case of a dispute, you can contact the researcher or his supervisors via details given below.

Dr. Jane Strachan  
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Yours sincerely

Alaster Gibson  
Bethlehem Tertiary Institute  
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Tauranga  
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DDI (07) 579 1730

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**Invitation to participate in research project:  
'Spirituality in principal leadership and its influence on teachers and teaching'**

*Informed consent*

I .....(please print full name)  
as principal of .....(school name)  
volunteer to give my consent to participate in Alaster Gibson's research called,  
"Spirituality in principal leadership and its influence on teachers and teaching."

I understand that the purpose of this study is to describe the phenomenon of spirituality in principal leadership within primary school contexts and its influence on teachers personally and their professional practice of teaching. I am happy to participate in the three interviews, the reflective journaling activity, and the observations. I realise that I have the right to withdraw at any stage, up until the beginning of the second round of interviews and that this will not unduly affect the research.

I am aware that three teachers will be sought to participate in this research and the interview questions will invite them to comment on my spirituality in principal leadership and its influence on them as teachers and on their teaching. I am aware that the consent of the staff in general will be sought for the observations of the principal in a few normal school activities such as a staff meeting, assembly and playground duty.

I am aware that information held about me will be kept confidential and the identity of myself, the school and participating teachers will as far as is reasonably possible, not be identifiable in any subsequent thesis or reports. I am aware that all transcribed data and any observational field notes will be made available to me and be subject to my approval. I am aware that should more than the required number of principals respond then the researcher will select participants based on criteria outlined in this letter.

Finally, I am aware that in the case of a dispute I can contact the researcher's supervisors via details given above.

I am also happy to include the following information.

*Number of years as principal of this school:* .....

*Number of fulltime teaching staff:* .....

*My spirituality is/ is not (circle one) related to a religious affiliation.*

*Brief description of school:*

.....  
.....

Contact work phone number: .....

Email: .....

Signed: .....

Date: .....

**Please place your response in the stamped and addressed envelope provided and post it back to the researcher within 10 days.**

**Consent to participate declined**

Dear Alaster

I wish to decline the invitation to participate in this research. I understand that this will in no way prejudice me, the school or any of its staff.

Signed: .....

School: .....

Date: .....

---

**Please place your response in the stamped and addressed envelope provided and post it back to the researcher within 10 days.**

*Thank you very sincerely for your time to read this invitation.*

*Alaster.*

**Appendix 3:** Letter seeking permission from School Board of trustees to conduct research.

Chairperson School Board of Trustees  
Address

Date

**RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH**

Dear Chairperson

This letter asks for your permission to conduct a research project with your school principal and teachers. My name is Alaster Gibson and I am enrolled at the University of Waikato in the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD). My research topic is inquiring into the relatively new and exciting field of *'Spirituality in principal leadership and its influence on teachers and teaching.'*

This research is designed as a descriptive case study of the phenomenon of spirituality in four school contexts. It is not an evaluative study of one school against another. I am intentionally leaving the term 'spirituality' undefined so as to be inclusive of any principal/teacher desiring to be part of this research. The identity of all participants and the respective schools will be kept strictly confidential and be referred to by pseudonyms in any subsequent reports.

As a participant, the principal will be involved in only three 50 minute interviews (one per term for three terms), a reflective journaling activity (only 2 ½ hours per term for three terms) and some observation by the researcher during the course of a few normal school activities such as a playground duty, a staff meeting and an assembly.

Teacher participants, of whom I only require three, will be involved in a series of three 50 minute interviews, one per term, spread across a three term period. Teacher interviews will be conducted after school and not disrupt normal student learning time. These activities are designed to have minimal impact on busy work schedules. Should more than three teachers consent to participate then the researcher will make a selection based on the following criteria. (i) A spread of teachers across the junior, middle and senior areas of the school. (ii) A balance of gender. (iii) A balance of experience and length of time having worked with the principal.

Interviews will be audio-taped, transcribed, then returned for editing and approval by respective participants. A professional typist, who will sign a statement of confidentiality, will do the transcription. All data will be coded so that neither the name of your school nor the names of any of your staff will be used.

The observations will involve the researcher accompanying the principal in an unobtrusive manner during the course of some normal school activities to take field notes. Field notes will be made available to the principal and be subject to

his/her approval. Any teacher directly included in the field notes will have the right to edit and approve any material relating to them personally.

Participants will be able to withdraw from this research without any consequences at any time up until the beginning of the second round of interviews, and such action will not unduly affect the research. Any information obtained as part of this research will be stored in a secure place and held indefinitely in accordance with the University of Waikato requirements. As such it will remain strictly confidential to the researcher, his supervisors and examiners, and be used only for the purposes of the research process and in any subsequent publications.

Finally, should you have any further questions or in the case of a dispute, you can contact the researcher or his supervisors via details given below.

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Yours sincerely

*Alaster Gibson*  
Bethlehem Tertiary Institute  
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DDI (07) 579 1730

---

### **Permission to conduct research**

#### *Informed consent*

As the chairperson of

.....  
(name of school) Board of Trustees, I give permission to Alaster Gibson to conduct his research project into 'Spirituality in principal leadership and its influence on teachers and teaching.'

I understand that the purpose of this study is to describe the phenomenon of spirituality in principal leadership within primary school contexts and its influence on teachers personally and their professional practice of teaching. I realise that participants have the right to withdraw at any stage, up until the beginning of the second round of interviews.

I am aware that all transcribed data and field notes will be made available to relevant participants and be subject to their approval. I am aware that information held about participants will be kept confidential and as far as possible, the researcher will take all reasonable steps to safeguard the anonymity of the

principal, the teachers and school throughout the research process and in any subsequent publications.

I am aware that should more than three teachers desire to participate the researcher will select three participants based on criteria explained in the introductory letter. I am aware that should the Board of Trustees consent to this research, the principal and teachers still retain the right to withdraw according to the conditions explained above. Finally, I am aware that in the case of a dispute I can contact the researcher's supervisors via details also contained in the letter above.

Signed: .....

Date: .....

**Appendix 4:** Invitation for teachers in State schools to participate in research.

School  
Address

Date

**RE: INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH**

Dear teacher

This letter invites you to participate in my research. My name is Alaster Gibson and I am enrolled at the University of Waikato in the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD). My research topic is inquiring into the relatively new and exciting field of ‘Spirituality in principal leadership and its influence on teachers and teaching.’

The term spirituality has been intentionally left ‘undefined’ to be inclusive of any principal for whom spirituality is considered an important part of who they are as a person and of the way they engage in principal leadership.

This research is designed as a descriptive case study involving four primary school contexts. It is not an evaluative study of one school against another. Rather it seeks an overall understanding of how this characteristic of educational leadership might influence teachers personally, and the many aspects of their professional practice of teaching. The identity of all participants and their respective schools will be kept strictly confidential and be referred to by pseudonyms in any subsequent reports.

Specifically, I am seeking your consent

1. For me to conduct some observations of your principal during the course of a few normal school activities such as a staff meeting, assembly and playground duty. The focus of the observations is primarily on the principal and not on the teachers. The researcher will take field notes, which will subsequently be made available to any teacher(s) involved for their approval.
2. To volunteer to participate in a series of three 50 minute interviews spread across three terms (i.e. one per term). The interview questions will invite you to talk about your experiences and perceptions of the influence of spirituality in principal leadership. Please note, that for the interviews I only require three teachers from each school, preferably one from the junior, middle and senior classes.

The interviews will be scheduled at the end of the school day or some other time convenient for you. The interviews are designed to have minimal impact on teachers’ busy work schedules. Interviews will be audio-taped, transcribed, then returned to respective teachers for approval. This review of the transcript may take up to 30 minutes. A professional typist, who will sign a statement of confidentiality, will do the transcription and you will be informed of the name of that person at our interviews. All data will be coded so your name will not be used. Pseudonyms will be used in all reporting to maintain your anonymity.

Should more than three teachers volunteer then a selection will be made by the researcher based on the following criteria. (i) A spread across the junior, middle and senior areas of the school. (ii) A balance of gender. (iii) A balance of experience and length of time having worked with the principal.

Although your principal and the Board of Trustees have already kindly agreed to help with this research, you are under no obligation to do so. Nor will you be prejudiced in any way, should you decline to be among the three to be interviewed. However, if you do not wish to be one of the three teachers to be interviewed, your consent for me to engage in the principal observation is still sincerely invited.

Please note that as a participant in the interviews you will be able to withdraw from this research without any consequences, at any time, up until the beginning of the second round of interviews, and that such action will not unduly affect the research. Should withdrawal from this research be necessary please contact the researcher by phone or email as per details below.

Any information give as part of this research will be stored in a secure place and held indefinitely in accordance with University of Waikato requirements. As such it will remain strictly confidential to the researcher, his supervisors and examiners, and be used only for the purposes of the subsequent thesis and appropriate academic publications. As far as possible, the researcher will take all reasonable steps to safeguard the anonymity of all principals, teachers and their schools throughout the research process and in any subsequent publications.

Finally should you have any further questions or in the case of a dispute, you can contact the researcher or his supervisors via details given below.

Dr. Jane Strachan  
Professional Studies in Education  
School of Education  
Private Bag 3105  
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07 8 384466 x 6356  
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Human Development & Counselling  
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Yours sincerely

*Alaster Gibson*  
Bethlehem Tertiary Institute  
Private bag 12015  
Tauranga  
[a-gibson@bethlehem.ac.nz](mailto:a-gibson@bethlehem.ac.nz)  
DDI (07) 579 1730

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**Invitation to participate in research project:  
'Spirituality in principal leadership and its influence on teachers and  
teaching'.**

**Informed consent.**

**(1) For the researcher to conduct some observation of the principal.**

I ..... (please print full name) as a teacher at ..... (school name) give my consent for Alaster Gibson to conduct some observations of the principal during the course of a few normal school activities such as a staff meeting, assembly and playground duty.

I understand that the observations might indirectly involve me and that the primary purpose of these discreet and unobtrusive observations, in the normal school setting, is to observe the spirituality in the principal's leadership and its influence on teachers and their teaching. I understand that I have the right to request any relevant field notes that refer to me and that I have the right to edit such notes. I am aware that any information I give as part of this research will be stored in a secure place and held indefinitely in accordance with University of Waikato requirements. As such it will remain strictly confidential to the researcher, his supervisors and examiners, and be used only for the purposes of the subsequent thesis and appropriate academic publications. As far as possible, the researcher will take all reasonable steps to safeguard the anonymity of all principals, teachers and their schools throughout the research process and in any subsequent publications.

Finally I am aware that in the case of a dispute I can contact the researcher's supervisors via details given below.

Signed .....

Date .....

**(2) For participation in three 50 minute interviews spread across three terms.**

I ..... (please print full name) as a teacher at ..... (school name) give my consent and volunteer to participate in the three 50 minute interviews inquiring into 'Spirituality in principal leadership and its influence on teachers and teaching.' I understand the interviews will be audio-taped, transcribed and made available to me for approval. I realise I have the right to withdraw at any stage, up until the beginning of the second round of interviews and that such action will not unduly affect this research. I am aware that information held about me will be kept strictly confidential and my identity, the school and participating teachers and principal will, as much as is reasonably possible, not be identified in any subsequent thesis or report. I am aware that should more than three teachers respond, the researcher will select three participants based on the criteria in the letter above. Finally, I am aware that in the case of a dispute I can contact the researcher's supervisors via details given above.

I am happy to include the following information:

Number of years as a teacher at this school.....

Year level that I currently teacher at .....  
Contact work phone number .....  
Email .....  
Signed .....  
Date .....

Please place this response sheet in the box provided in the staffroom within the next 7 days.

-----  
**Consent to participate declined**

Dear Alaster

(1) I wish to decline the invitation to give my consent for this researcher to conduct observations on the principal in the school contexts as described above. I understand that this in no way prejudices myself, the principal or the school.

Signed .....  
Date .....

(2) I wish to decline the invitation to give my consent to volunteer to participate in the three 50 minute interviews.

Signed .....  
Date .....

Please place this response in the box provided in the staffroom within the next 7 days.

*Thank you very sincerely for your time to read this invitation.*

*Alaster*

## **Appendix 5:** Semi-structured interview schedule for principal participants.

Because the interviews are semi-structured, the following schedule is only seen as a guide. The questions listed below will be used to open up dialogue of the topic and be accompanied by probes and prompts to follow up on the participants' responses.

Three schedules are intentionally designed to fit with the '*multi-phase*' design of the research. A three term period will provide a richer set of data in that it will allow the cyclical feeding in of emerging ideas and themes to be tested and clarified. It will also hopefully capture a greater range and variety of insights into the phenomenon of spirituality that occur '*over time.*'

### **Interview 1**

1. What is your understanding of human 'spirituality'? Why do you think that way?
2. What are your feelings about spirituality being expressed within your primary school? Why do say that?
3. What values, characteristics, behaviours and beliefs best help to describe your spirituality in principal leadership at this school?
4. What is your understanding of how your spirituality influences teachers, firstly as people and secondly in their professional practice of teaching?
5. Reflect on spirituality in principal leadership and its role in developing the mission/vision of the school, improving the quality of education provided and in dealing with problems. How did your spirituality help you in these areas?
6. *Is there anything else you can think of that you believe is important to help me understand your spirituality in principal leadership and its influence on teachers and teaching?*

### **Interview 2**

1. In your opinion what aspect of your spirituality in principal leadership do you think is having the most impact on the growth and development of the culture of this school? Why do you think that?
2. How might spirituality enrich your understanding what it means to teach and *be* a teacher?
3. In your opinion why is spirituality important in your role of providing principal leadership in this school? In other words if you didn't exercise spirituality in principal leadership what might happen?
4. Could you describe some experiences whereby your spirituality in principal leadership may have influenced a change in the life of a teacher and/or their professional practice of teaching?
5. What do you think teachers might look for in the spirituality of a principal leader?
6. In reflecting on your spirituality in your role as principal what do you find most challenging or what would you like to change? Why do you say that?
7. *Based on the data collated and analysed so far there are ideas and themes that are emerging. Could you comment on the accuracy of these themes \_\_\_\_\_ or clarify the meaning of these points \_\_\_\_\_ ?*

### Interview 3

1. Do you think spirituality is an important aspect of being a teacher and in teaching children? If so how do you as principal encourage this?
2. What's your opinion about problems principals might have in expressing their spirituality to teachers? Why do you say that?
3. Can you give some specific examples of when you especially rely on your spirituality in principal leadership?
4. Leadership influence can come about through direct, indirect and reciprocal ways. It can be expressed through your *position* as principal, your *professional expertise* and through who you are as a *person*. How does spirituality help you as a principal to exercise leadership *influence*?
5. What's your understanding about the development or growth of spirituality in principal leadership over time? Can you recall some incidences that impacted your spirituality and why?
6. In your opinion do you think teachers would attribute any aspects of your role in providing principal leadership to your spirituality? Which aspects (if any) and what makes you think that?
7. Reflecting on this research process, how might it have influenced your attitude toward and practice of spirituality in principal leadership?
8. *From the data analysed so far there are some ideas and themes that I'd like you to comment on. Could you comment on the accuracy/importance of \_\_\_\_\_ or could you clarify the meaning of \_\_\_\_\_?*

### Additional 'exploratory' questions based on Hodge (2005).

1. How has your spirituality supported you in times of crisis?
2. How would you describe your spiritual strengths?
3. How do these spiritual strengths show through in your role in principal leadership?
4. Has a teacher's spirituality ever influenced you as a principal? Can you explain your understanding as to why this happened?

## **Appendix 6:** Semi-structured interview schedule for teachers.

Because the interviews are semi-structured, the following schedule is only seen as a guide. The questions listed below will be used to open up dialogue of the topic and be accompanied by probes and prompts to follow up on the participants' responses.

Three schedules are intentionally designed to fit with the '*longitudinal*' nature of the research. A three term period will provide a richer set of data in that it will allow the cyclical feeding in of emerging ideas and themes to be tested and clarified. It will also hopefully capture a greater range and variety of insights into the phenomenon of spirituality that occur '*over time*.' It could be argued that participants may recall other ideas or critical incidences in subsequent interviews that didn't surface within the time frame of the first round.

### **Interview 1**

1. What does spirituality mean to you as a teacher?
2. What are your feelings about spirituality being expressed within your primary school? Why do you feel that way?
3. How would you describe spirituality in your principal's leadership? What makes you think that way?
4. In reflecting of this topic of spirituality in principal leadership, in what ways do you believe the principal's spirituality has influenced you personally as a teacher? What makes you believe that?
5. What aspects of the principal's leadership in general have had the greatest impact on your teaching practice? In your opinion do these aspects relate to the principal's spirituality? Please explain.

### **Interview 2**

1. What is your understanding of the personal character of a good teacher? Does spirituality contribute to being a good teacher and if so how?
2. What do you think makes an excellent principal? In your opinion, do any of the things you've described relate to a person's spirituality? Please explain.
3. In what ways has your principal shared his/her spirituality in the life of this school since we last met? Why do you think your principal expresses his/her spirituality in those ways?
4. Can you recall a specific incident in your principal's leadership that has affected you in some way over the past term? In reflection on that incident do you think spirituality was a contributing factor? Please explain.
5. *From the data analysed so far there are some ideas and themes that I'd like you to comment on. Could you comment on the accuracy/importance of \_\_\_\_\_ or could you clarify the meaning of \_\_\_\_\_?*

### **Interview 3**

1. Would you like to see spirituality in principal leadership encouraged and developed? Why do you feel that way?
2. What is your opinion of having no spirituality in principal leadership? How might this influence you as a teacher in this school?

3. Can you recall some specific examples of spirituality in principal leadership that you have observed? In what way have they influenced you as a teacher?
4. In reflecting on spirituality in principal leadership since the beginning of this research how has your understanding changed?
5. *From the data analysed so far there are some ideas and themes that I'd like you to comment on. Could you evaluate the accuracy/importance of \_\_\_\_\_ or could you give your opinion on the significance of \_\_\_\_\_ ?*

## Appendix 7: Emailed template of principals' reflective journal.

Participant's name: \_\_\_\_\_

### Guidelines:

1. Please complete five days (1 school week) reflective journaling, ONCE a term over a three term period. Each day's entries should take only 30 minutes.
2. Just type directly onto this template below each day's, three sub-headings.
3. Before you begin – reflect on YOUR understanding of spirituality in principal leadership.
4. There are only three parts to each day's journaling.
5. When 5 days' entries are completed please check them through for accuracy and acceptability. Consent for this data to be used in this research is implied by your emailing of the material to the researcher at the following address  
[a-gibson@bethlehem.ac.nz](mailto:a-gibson@bethlehem.ac.nz) .

*Thank you for you professional support and time. I will provide some feedback on the journaling within the next few weeks.*

### Week 1 daily reflections

#### Monday:

**Describe** experiences during the day that you believe illustrate spirituality in principal leadership having an influence on teachers? That is, who teachers '*are*' as people, their *good character* and *well-being*.

**Describe** experiences during the day that you believe illustrate spirituality in principal leadership having an influence on teachers' professional practice of teaching. (*Teaching* meaning such things as creating and managing effective, relational and safe learning environments, growing in professional knowledge, planning, assessing, reflecting and reporting on learning, exploring a range of teaching approaches, utilizing a variety of resources and technologies, having high expectations and yet being flexible and responsive etc.)

**Reflect** on your integration of spirituality in principal leadership today, what do you think went well or not so well and why? What would you like to do differently tomorrow, based on what you've experienced today?

#### Tuesday:

**Describe** experiences during the day that you believe illustrate spirituality in principal leadership having an influence on teachers? That is, who teachers '*are*' as people, their *good character* and *well-being*.

**Describe** experiences during the day that you believe illustrate spirituality in principal leadership having an influence on teachers' professional practice of teaching. (*Teaching* meaning such things as creating and managing effective, relational and safe learning environments, growing in professional knowledge, planning, assessing, reflecting and reporting on learning, exploring a range of teaching approaches, utilizing a variety of resources and technologies, having high expectations and yet being flexible and responsive etc.)

**Reflect** on your integration of spirituality in principal leadership today, what do you think went well or not so well and why? What would you like to do differently tomorrow, based on what you've experienced today?

**Wednesday: etc...**

## **Appendix 8:** Guidelines of overt non-participant observations.

1. The goal of the non-participant observations directly linked to research question(s).

*What is the significance of spirituality in principal leadership on teachers personally and their professional practice of teaching?* Secondary questions underpinning these observations: What does the phenomenon of spirituality in principal leadership within a range of New Zealand primary school contexts (State, private and integrated) look like? Is it possible to attribute the influence of principal leadership on teachers and teaching to the *spirituality* of the principal and if so how? What evidence is there to suggest that the phenomenon of spirituality in principal leadership could make a contribution to further understanding the subject of effective educational leadership?

2. Intentions: The researcher will be able to observe each principal in three normal every day activities such as a staff meeting (senior or whole staff), assembly and a playground duty. Each observation will need to be negotiated. Field notes will be made of dialogue and behaviour which will subsequently be checked by participants for consent. It is anticipated that each observation would be approximately 30-45 minutes in duration.

3. Introduction to participants, their educational context and the researcher getting acclimatised. How will researcher become acquainted, develop trust and minimize suspicion or the 'spy syndrome'? Observations will be introduced after the first round of interviews so a rapport will have already been established. Researcher will endeavour to visit school at such a time when he can meet staff informally at morning tea and lunch time on the day of the interviews. This will help to develop trust and minimize suspicion.

4. Description of the observational contexts. In the report this will be recorded generally so as to protect the identity of the school.

5. Field notes. Dictaphone recording of dialogue: To be subsequently transcribed, analysed and coded. Written notes: (Standardised recording format – four columns in a field notes booklet. Column 1= Descriptive notes of observed spirituality in principal leadership. Column 2 = Observations of potential influence on teachers personally. Column 3 = Observations of potential influence on the professional practice of teaching. Column 4= Interesting unforeseen issues for follow up during subsequent interviews.

6. Coding guidelines: Due to the '*undefined*' stance on spirituality, predetermined codes for pre-supposed categories of characteristics that might give meaning to spirituality cannot be developed ahead of actual field observations. Therefore notes will be in abbreviated long-hand, with the potential for coding ideas emerging during the research process.

**Appendix 9: Summary of teachers' perspectives of spirituality.**

Table 2:: To show diverse spirituality perspectives in the nine teacher participants.	
<i><b>Greentree school</b></i>	
Abbey	<p><i>I have to define what I mean by spirituality. The best definition I came up with for me was "It's an internalization of the purpose of life and your role in it." So that meant that as a teacher my role is to help people in the best way that I am able to. Help them to develop strong values and a strong sense of identity and help them to define their role in life. It is a very important part to me.</i></p> <p><i>I think they're actually secondary[to the 3Rs]. I think we really have to make people feel good about themselves and secure in themselves to do anything really. And to see a sense of purpose.</i></p> <p>(GT, teacher Abbey, 1:1) Influences described: Tragedy, wonderful people, own children, church +ve and -ve experiences,</p>
Bonnie	<p><i>Philosophy of life, how people relate to people, how people carry out their lives and respond to things. Underlying principles. Un-spiritual people are hard, cold emotional side. Doing for now, no hope in the future, clinical, no far reaching effects of their lives. Spiritual people are softer, more relational, caring.</i></p> <p>(GT, teacher Bonnie, 1:1)</p>
Claire	<p><i>An awareness of what's on the inside, my beliefs, so personally that would come from I was raised catholic. So for me it comes from that but it's wider with life experience and stuff like that. And I think that values and principles become part of that but they're more guided by your beliefs than, so in a way they are a reflection of your spirituality. Yeah I think also because my dad's Maori and so for me there's a cultural perspective there as well. It's almost like experience of your reaction often to different experiences like the good and the bad, that it all becomes part of it how you respond... But for me as well it [beginning the school class time with a prayer] brings I suppose I feel this sense of wairua within the classroom</i></p> <p>(GT, teacher Claire, 1:1)</p>
<i><b>Blue sea school</b></i>	
Debbie	<p><i>It's mainly the teaching of values to these children that I know a lot of them are not getting it at home. I sort of don't take it on the God aspect but mainly the teaching of values- how to be a caring good person, yes how to care for others, how to be sympathetic all the aspects of not hitting not bullying all those things come under that, that's what I think of as spirituality... I have my beliefs but this is where it gets really hard. I feel really uncomfortable with talking to the children about you know my feelings about God, because I know that out there, there's a lot of controversy and you've got to be so careful that you're not going to tread on toes. I find it difficult. You've got to remain impartial, you have your own beliefs but you've got to remain impartial as the teacher. So this is where, and then my spirituality is how I deal with people, how I treat people, how I respect people, my colleagues in particular. And so therefore that's hopefully, that modelling, behaviour is what the children pick up, hopefully. (BS, teacher Debbie, 1:1) Also influence from personal tragedy.</i></p>
Edward	<p><i>I find it's got some sort of semi-religious undertones, um depending on your background I suppose as well, your family's background and stuff like that. To me personally, I don't, I find myself spiritual but not religious. So um I've beliefs in the world but I don't push them in the classroom and I don't really take on board what other people say about their religion their spirituality. It's their thing for themselves.</i></p> <p><i>... spirits and things like that, we're just um, I've never been religious in my life... if someone said to me do you believe in something, I would say no. Like if they said do you believe in or have these religious beliefs I'd say no but spirituality to me is how you feel, it's a hard word, how I feel comfortable with myself in society... so I might find certain things immoral and other people find them fine to do in public, that sort of thing...I find that my personal, I don't know, the spirit, person, or thing behind me, that tells me yes and no,... that influences my spirituality.</i></p> <p>(BS, teacher Edward, 1:1)</p>
Fiona	<p><i>I think of spirituality as something that you bring yourself and it's your personality. I wouldn't consider myself to be a particularly spiritual person. I have an idea of a</i></p>

	<i>Christian background and I think that influences my knowledge, if you like, that I bring to the classroom. I just think that's where it makes you the person that you are. And therefore that obviously has an effect on my teaching. You are who are as a person. That's what you bring to the classroom... Spirituality is probably a belief that there's something guiding me in my morals and the way that I am. And I think that comes from my parents more than anything else. It's the way I've been brought up. And so therefore I pass that on to the children in my class, they're my morals, my values ... (BS, teacher Fiona, 1:1)</i>
<b>Yellow sun school</b>	
Georgette	<i>Spirituality for me is the centre of my being and so therefore when I work with the students on a daily basis it means that I portray to them the love of my example who is Jesus. I don't have the privilege to speak openly about my belief in Jesus but expect them to know by how I care for the students that they, that there's something special about how I accept them how I deal with their behaviour. I go the extra mile to care about their family, everything about them. Their physical being. What they eat, how well they slept last night, how are they are socially with their peers. So rather than from going from a disciplinarian point of view, it's more of a caring thing, at times dismissing the language, unless it's pointed at someone in particular but rather looking at the needs of the child and meeting their needs on a daily basis... I do believe that the bible is actually written every part of it is applicable to us to day. Um and that to me that is so important that I'm constantly referring to that so that I'm able to bring you know another perspective to the lives of others. I couldn't call myself a Christian if I didn't... (YS, teacher Georgette, 1:1)</i>
Hemi	<i>It's something you don't really think about as you teach. It's quite a hard question to answer actually. I think it's bringing in one's own experiences into the teaching. Experiences from the past. Personal experiences mainly. To me here because I've had a wealth of experience out there in the world before I became a teacher my back ground and upbringing has a led a lot into the way that I teach now. It takes me to the level of where the children are at knowing where I came from and a lot of my experiences pertain to the children I teach now-a-days and as a Maori teacher too our spirituality came from a lot of spiritual teachings have been, we call it hahi but different teachings about the Bible. They were impressed on us as children. A lot of it comes out that comes out in my teaching as well. It's sort of being in a whanau situation and to me teaching is around having possibly as I teach my children I bring them in as one big family and there's a whanau situation for me actually and I probably make myself mum and dad for the day in teaching these children... I think my spirituality comes in understanding those children that I'm teaching...it is around aroha and we take it for granted as Maori because aroha has been one of the biggest things that comes through within Maori whanau. (YS, teacher Hemi, 1:1).</i>
Iris	<i>Having a belief that you're not just here to feed the grass at the end of it. You know, that there is a purpose to life and things like that. So to me there's a purpose and my view is that it's to help others and I believe that, you know I believe in the Christian values. So I believe that there's a purpose to life. Spirituality is about the morals and ethics and your belief in perhaps why you exist and stuff like that. So to me mine is to help others and to bring out the best in others so hopefully I would ... that's why I teach... to bring out the best in others... what you hope to do is to hopefully get others to think about other people in this world that your not just here to gain money and possessions, that relationships are important in life and treating other people with respect and leaving a good mark on the environment, family whatever... Living life to your full potential that sort of thing so that's what I want for the children that I work or else I don't know why you'd want to do it. I don't know why you'd want to do it if you didn't think that... Christian values I think it's that belief in a higher being, but I believe spirituality means different things to different people. But often they have a higher being whether it be God or a Buddha or whatever or the environment or the earth ... or something. (YS, teacher Iris, 1:1)</i>

Appendix 10 Sample of initial analysis of a principal interview transcript.

**Qul. Do you think spirituality is an important aspect of being a teacher and teaching children? If so how do you as a principal encourage this?**

I guess last time we were talking about what ~~XXXXXXXX~~  
~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ said around spirituality being holistic, a part of you... like the Maori is... that made me really think and realise that that's actually what I do consider for myself as spirituality because I thought when my Maori staff approach school they approach the whole of school from their spirituality or from their Maoriness. So everything they do, they do from their Maori culture. The way they plan, the words they use, the way they look at everything and they start with a whakatoki, they start with the past and build to the future... everything, every single thing they do, they do it from that perspective, so I think in the same way you were talking last time about how your supervisor was questioning how you can be spiritual and how can you separate it out... I don't think you can separate it out because I think everybody has a spirituality.

Comment [ag1]: 'Everybody has a spirituality' - spirituality is an important part of the teaching staff who are also Maori.

I think some people don't connect it to what it is. And some people their spirituality side is just a yearning or it might even be a loneliness or a hole or a deadness, in some people it's their cultures, and in some people it's a religious thing... I believe everyone has a spiritual aspect but I think that some people have connected it up with what they call a spiritual or a religious element and other people appreciate the sunrise and sunset and that hooks in to their spirituality. My belief is that from my Christian perspective, my belief is that God's made us with that aspect, that he's calling to everybody and that some people haven't opened their eyes in that area or have got them a little bit open call it something different. So from that aspect, somebody of the likes of myself, everything I do I think of it from God's perspective and from when I walk through my whole day - it's from God's perspective. Because that's just who I am.

Comment [ag2]: A wide scope of understanding about the term 'spirituality' - certainly allows for its importance in the lives of many teachers...

Comment [ag3]: Anonymised teacher's natural dimension to spirituality described here...

Comment [ag4]: Personal spiritual position...

Comment [ag5]: Affirming 'indigal' nature of spirituality with her personal and professional life.

**Appendix 11** Sample of initial analysis of a teacher interview transcript.

**Let's look at question 4. In reflecting on this topic of spirituality in principal leadership in what ways do you believe the principal's spirituality has influenced you personally as a teacher?**

It's given me lots more confidence to follow those beliefs because I've always held really dear, and in my own classroom teaching I always tried to establish those kinds of climates however in the past with principals that I've worked with the principal previous to

Confidential transcript 5

XXXXXXXXXXXX and the one that I worked at in my last school, that didn't have the same underlying spirituality of 'living spirituality' there. I was never very comfortable, and you were never encouraged to do things to ... for example at my previous school my father died and my principal said I hope that you'll be back the day after tomorrow because of ... whatever. Now, afterwards I just should have said no but I just felt this weight of guilt on me that he imposed and I think that's something XXXXXXXXXXXX never imposes, he actually allays any guilt on all teachers, he takes that away. Guilt's probably a word that some principals do put on you.

**Comment [ag34]:** Influence on teachers 'confidence to follow those beliefs that were held dear'...

**Comment [ag35]:** It would appear teachers have values that can be encouraged or hindered/frustrated depending on the role modelling and support of the principal as leader.

**Comment [ag36]:** 'Living spirituality' - could this become a title for a research article?

**Comment [ag37]:** Abuse of leadership power

**Comment [ag38]:** Influence of spirituality in principal leadership 'allays guilt'... Does this equate with compassion?

~~Tricked up from another interview that problem in the school was~~

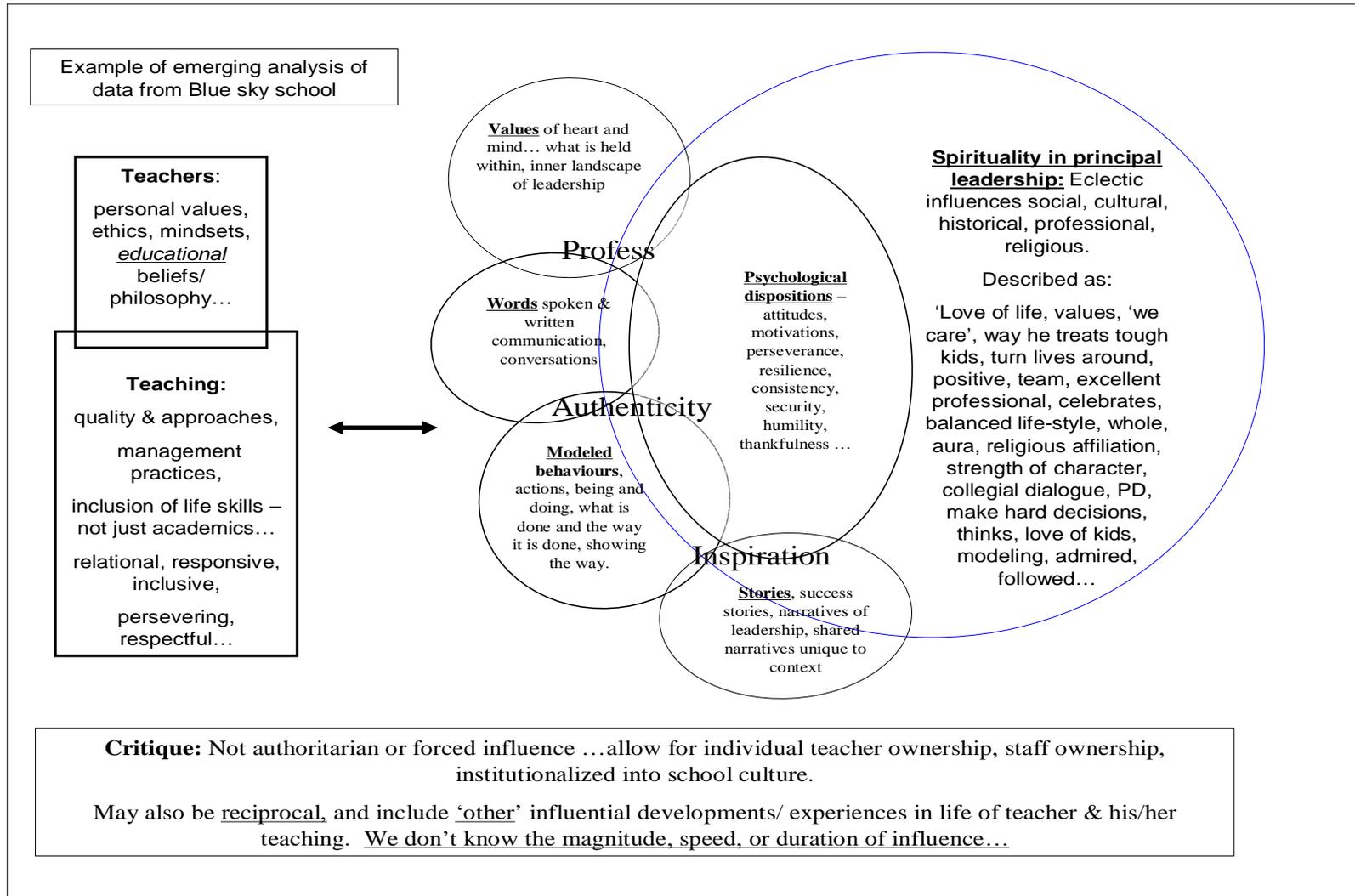
**Appendix 12** Sample of initial analysis of a principal’s reflective journal transcript.

<p><b>Reflect</b> on your integration of spirituality in principal leadership today, what do you think went well or not so well and why? What would you like to do differently tomorrow, based on what you’ve experienced today?</p>	<p>... leadership affirmed to be strongly focused on teaching/learning by ‘independent observer.’</p>
<p>Shared the possibilities with senior staff of post grad quals happening thru Waikato and our project- school based, maybe school time, action school based research--- even things like getting academic credit for being an associate rather than just money- all sorts of possibilities.; (we had an observer sit in on senior management team also appraising/providing feedback to us as a team )</p>	<p><b>Comment [ag30]:</b> Very professional</p>
<p>The cross country had some flaws – crowd control in main- in our eval we have seen a better more manageable way of doing it- pity we hadn’t thought of it earlier)</p>	<p><b>Comment [ag31]:</b> Mistakes are opportunities to learn and improve – not to condemn.</p>
<p>Some kids handed in a wallet, and I didn’t get a chance to thank them – will do thurs; I still managed to get a walk down beach even after arriving home at 6</p>	<p><b>Comment [ag32]:</b> Valuing honesty in children – acknowledge this publicly.</p>
<p><b>Thursday</b> <b>Describe</b> experiences during the day that you believe illustrate spirituality in principal leadership having an influence on teachers? That is, who teachers ‘are’ as people, their good character and well-being.</p>	<p><b>Comment [ag33]:</b> Self-care important in spirituality in principal leadership.</p>
<p>Checked on a staff member who is going on for hernia op on Fri; also assoc princ who has been feeling off) also caretaker who is back on deck; spoke to a new teacher re possible post grad opportunities coming, spoke to a relieving teacher re his excellent job in managing quite a diverse class – years of experience/wisdom based on very strong relationships key to success- also signalled there is part time work here permanently; thanked teacher in charge of c/c on well done on organisation; our review has thrown up lots of ideas for 2008; other assoc princ had to put up with some out of character off the wall behaviour from a girl—quite bazaar – in fact very bazaar- off home , but popped into class and thanked the class for their ignoring of behaviour; supervised a lunch time group of kids that have been fighting at lunchtime- so it didn’t tie up a teacher cqs of size of group [[ in all of this 95% of our kids are great these are small minority]]; also feel that there are some niggly kids out there at present- hopefully 3 day weekend will help</p>	<p><b>Comment [ag34]:</b> Pastoral care of staff</p>
	<p><b>Comment [ag35]:</b> Keen to ‘grow people professionally’</p>
	<p><b>Comment [ag36]:</b> Personal feedback to effective teacher -</p>
	<p><b>Comment [ag37]:</b> Public acknowledgement of teacher in charge of cross country – huge organisation.</p>
	<p><b>Comment [ag38]:</b> Principal leadership very pro-active towards staff and children.</p>
<p><b>Describe</b> experiences during the day that you believe illustrate spirituality in principal leadership having an influence on teachers’ professional practice of teaching / Teaching</p>	<p><b>Comment [ag39]:</b> Spirituality in leadership able to see the real picture, keep a balanced perspective... able to reflect on the job.</p>

Appendix 13. Sample of transcript of field notes from an overt, non-participant observation of a principal.

Date Time Context	Descriptive notes of context	Observation of potential influence on teachers and teaching	Interesting/unforseen observations
20.12.06	<p>Final end of year prize-giving and graduation assembly for Y6 pupils.</p> <p>On site @ school hall.</p> <p>Evening, 7pm.</p> <p>Principal &amp; senior staff + BOT (P/SS/BOT) formally called in by senior kappa haka group.</p> <p>Principal @ front beside DP both draped in korowai.</p> <p>Processed to front of hall where all gathered sang Maori and English version of <u>national anthem</u>.</p> <p>After anthem, kappa haka (KH) group performed on stage then KH &amp; P/SS/BOT</p> <p>Principal 'Graduation speech'. (approx. 5 mins). Presented 'on' stage, away from microphone, Y6 students seated on hall floor below.</p>	<p>P processed <u>beside</u> DP not alone in front, acknowledges shared leadership roles and value of colleagues.</p> <p>P stood respectful and sang gently both of the anthems – affirming the value of the words/ meaning of this traditional song.</p> <p>P waited on stage quite intentionally until all SS and BOT were seated first indicating putting others first, ensuring they were comfortable before <u>himself</u>.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>GRADUATION SPEECH Presentation was personalized, didn't refer to notes, <u>spoke</u> directly, sincerely and meaningfully to the students (no mic). Content focused on acknowledging them positively. 'Great upstanding children.' Thanked BOT, parents &amp; staff.</p> <p><u>Refered</u> to the 'Bible' and the story of the man who built his house on the rock versus the sand. Encouraged <u>chd</u>. To build there lives on the foundations they've received in their education @ school. This foundation was linked to the motto- to dream, strive achieve but on its own a person would become self-centred – must have '<u>kotahitanga</u>' as the foundation for the rest of your lives. (<u>Ngata online dictionary – relates kotahitanga to fellowship, solidarity, fraternity, getting on with each other, in marriage, at <u>yii</u> level – nationalism – check what meaning P and school place on this word</u>).</p> <p>Encouraged them to recognize that the past is gone, it cannot be changed, (<u>Is this merely a reflection on reality or is it linked to spiritual values such as 'Forgetting those things which are behind we press toward the mark'???</u>)</p> <p>'You have a future' to look forward to. (<u>Hope and a future – ask where this stems from in terms of spirituality, does it link with Jeremiah?</u>). P encouraged <u>chd</u>. To take what they'd learnt into their future.</p> <p>P said 'to be proud of your graduation certificate.' 'You've all left an imprint @ <u>XXXXX School</u>. Thanked them for their input to XXXX school.</p> <p>Inspired them that in their midst might come forth a PM, sports star, - re-emphasized the motto underpinned with <u>kotahitanga</u></p> <p>"Good luck we're proud of you". (What does P mean by <u>luck</u> – is life left to luck? What other parting words might he have used?)</p> <p>Speech was future focused, encouraging, affirming/honouring and hopeful. P related well to the children.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>CUP PRESENTATIONS One, the Craft cup, acknowledged citizenship and service to the school.</p> <p>P very briefly interrupted @ very end of the assembly to stand and acknowledge the excellent effort the AP had put in to organise the assembly.</p>	<p>One Y6 teacher <u>█</u> said she was really blessed to have Y6 kids, quoted from Mandela, said she believed 'you will soar' (Ask T if this relates to her spirituality?) She concluded by saying there's a special place for you all in 'my heart'.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>P remained attentive and focused throughout assembly, clapping gently for every student as they were presented with their grad. <u>Certs</u>, cups etc.</p> <p>-----</p> <p><b>Concluding reflection:</b></p> <p>Principal's spirituality filtered through in his speech – signals to teachers his values of these things – may directly/indirectly influence who they are as teachers. (Need to cross check this with cycle 2 of the data gathering with T participants.</p>

**Appendix 14:** Sample of conceptual analysis of spirituality in principal leadership at Blue Sky school.



**Appendix 15:** Sample of conceptual analysis of spirituality in principal leadership at Yellow Sun school.

