

**Perceptions of Spirituality and Spiritual
Development in Education held by Teachers and
Students on Teacher Training Courses**

UWIC

PhD

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ABSTRACT

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Abstract

Current legislation requires schools in England and Wales to promote the spiritual development of their pupils. The non-statutory guidance provided by various bodies has resulted in broad and inclusive definitions of the 'spiritual' and 'spiritual development' which combines both the religious and the secular and applies to all areas of the curriculum and school life. The world of academia has responded to this quasi-official guidance with varying degrees of approval to downright hostility, exposing the pretence that all agree with the current definitions and guidance. This thesis examines, by means of a cross-sectional survey, using qualitative and quantitative data gathered by means of questionnaire and interview, the perceptions of a sample of student teachers (428) on teacher training courses and qualified teachers (76) of the meanings of 'spirituality', 'spiritual experience' and 'spiritual development'. Although different viewpoints emerge, some underlying themes can be discerned. 'Spirituality' is conceived as the acquisition of a set of principles to guide everyday living, which may be derived from a religion, from a personal philosophy or from beliefs concerning morality, relationships with others, and an increased awareness of life and the world. The 'spiritual development' of pupils is seen to imply their freedom to search for and decide the principles they will adopt. The views of respondents on the extent to which 'spiritual development' should form part of the teacher's role are also reported, and it is suggested that current terminology associated with 'spirituality' be replaced with terms which students and teachers can more readily understand.

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Introduction

Rationale and context

The spiritual aspect of a person is considered to be a key feature of what makes us human. Whilst being natural and integral to a person, it is assumed by those with responsibility for educational policy and practice that this is not something that will necessarily grow and flourish independently of structured guidance and assistance from others. As a consequence of this view the educational system of England and Wales has ensured that such guidance and support is enshrined in legislation and advice. Inspectors of schools determine the quality of schools' effectiveness in promoting this dimension of education.

All of the above assumes that there is a shared understanding of the exact meaning of spirituality and spiritual development. In recent years there has been no shortage of literature which seeks to clarify this, though with varying degrees of success. Whether or not this literature from various bodies associated with the education system of England and Wales (NCC, 1993; SCAA, 1995, 1996a; Ofsted, 1994, 2004; QCA, 1997; ACCAC, 2000; WAG, 2008) and academics (Carr, 1994, 1995, 1996, 1999, 2003; Copley, 2000; Wright, 1998, 1999, 2000) has filtered through to schools and teachers, already hard pressed to keep abreast of a plethora of educational initiatives and legislation, is a question that needs asking. Furthermore, is

there consensus within and across schools concerning strategies for implementing the statutory requirement to provide opportunities to promote the spiritual development of pupils?

Not unreasonably, teachers are expected to have knowledge and understanding of the subjects they teach and the pedagogies which promote effective delivery. When it comes to spirituality and the spiritual development of pupils, how far do teachers' own spirituality and understanding of it determine how their interpretation and implementation of the statutory requirements to provide opportunities for the children in their charge to develop spiritually? The same question might be asked of those who train teachers and those who inspect schools.

As a former teacher, now a lecturer in initial teacher education and training (ITET) and an inspector of schools, these are questions I have often been asked and ask myself. Ideally teachers should be reflective practitioners who not only implement government directives but also evaluate, question and challenge these directives and their own practices. It might be an uncertainty I experience about my own spirituality and what is required of me professionally to engage and guide students in these matters. Experience has also caused me to view with a degree of scepticism the comprehension of inspectors concerning spirituality in schools and the soundness of the inspection criteria used for judging and grading the provision by schools of opportunities for the spiritual development of pupils. Added to this, I have a doubt about the reliability of some of the current advice to teachers and the practices in schools in providing occasions for spiritual growth. It is a search for answers to these questions and concerns that forms the basis of this research.

Research aims and questions

The principal aim is to discover what spirituality and spiritual development mean to teachers and prospective teachers and how far these meanings conform to the ‘official’ guidance they are given. How do they interpret and to what extent do they implement their professional responsibilities in this area? Is there a correlation between their own ‘spiritual’ experiences and the way they perceive their role as catalysts in the spiritual development of those in their charge? Do these views vary according to gender, length of service, the age phase in which they teach or train, and subject specialism? In short, this is an exploration and analysis of the perceptions of those training to become teachers and practising teachers on what spirituality and spiritual development mean to them both personally and professionally.

In order to answer these questions it seemed appropriate to elicit the views of students on undergraduate and postgraduate initial teacher training courses (both primary and secondary), and teachers (primary and secondary) through questionnaires and interviews.

It is to be hoped that the questions asked and answers to them will be of interest not only to me but also to a wider audience – namely fellow practitioners, professionals, academics, students training to become teachers and even the wider public, especially faith communities. Such an anticipated readership defines the genre of the writing. As such an eclectic and comprehensive survey of spirituality and what constitutes spiritual development is required, written in a manner which will, it is anticipated, both inform the likely readership and relate to the research design and findings. The following chapters will cover the theoretical and empirical fields; in

other words the broad and general coverage of the topic by quasi-governmental bodies and academics (theoretical field) and the more specific localised findings (empirical setting) of this research. The former will inform the latter and influence the questions asked and the research methods adopted to provide answers to these questions. The findings, it is to be hoped, may add to the knowledge and field of practice, which, as Brown and Dowling (1998, p.7) point out, is the essential aim of research enquiry.

The chapters look initially at the concept of the spiritual and spiritual development within the education system from 1944 to the present day. The legislation and ‘official’ advice and guidance provides a body of what might be considered to be practically canonical knowledge relating to the place of the spiritual within schools. It is essential to have a critical overview of this to understand the problem and current situation in which schools and teachers find themselves. The second chapter will broaden this debate by considering the authorities in the theoretical field. While this chapter will of necessity be wide-ranging, it is the relevance of the aspects covered to the education debate which determined their selection. In addition, they inform the methodology of chapter three. In this chapter we show how the theoretical (general) field enlightens the empirical (local) field which constitutes the body of the research. Chapter four provides an elaborated description of the findings of the research undertaken in the localised empirical sphere. The final chapter brings together the preceding chapters whereby the propositions, hypotheses and questions are revisited and recast as a conclusion with practical suggestions based on the data collected.

Chapter 1

Spirituality and Schools

1.1 The 1944 Education Act

The horrors of the Second World War proved a serious setback for those who believed in the moral and spiritual progress of mankind. Events such as these challenge the theory of evolutionary growth and genesis of the spirit (*noogenesis*) towards an ideal Omega Point purported by Teilhard de Chardin (1966). It was against this backdrop that the 1944 Education Act was framed, partly as ‘a blueprint for the moral and spiritual rejuvenation of society’ (Wright, 2000, p.63). Religious Instruction (RI) and school worship that was practically universal prior to the Act (Copley, 2000, p.57) was now legally compulsory in the Church and State system secured by the 1944 Act. Despite the concern of some over the compulsory requirement (Copley, 2000, p.57) a sound grounding in Christian values was considered to be beneficial to the development of children. There was always the so-called ‘conscience clause’ that provided an avenue for withdrawal from both RI and school worship for teachers and children whose parents wished to take it (HMSO, 1944, Pt 2, section 25[4]).

The 1944 Act incorporated ‘spiritual development’ as a statutory requirement in the education of children that remains to this day (e.g. Education Act 2002, sections 78 and 99). The Act explicitly required that public education ‘contributes towards the spiritual, moral, mental and physical development of the community’ (HMSO, 1944, Pt.2, section 7). Whilst there can be little doubt that the ‘spiritual dimension of education was confined within the narrow parameters of a confessional Christian education’ (Wright, 2000, p.64), and that spirituality was almost exclusively Christian

spirituality, it was not without a degree of controversy and debate that its inclusion was secured (Gilliat, 1996, p.162). Gilliat has pointed out that the 'spiritual' did not form part of the original draft of the legislation and it was Viscount Bledisloe, in the House of Lords, during the Bill's Committee Stage who stated that, along with the Christian ethic, 'it is spirituality which we want to advance at every stage of our national education if we want to promote morality as well as the other virtues of our race' (p.162). This early link between the spiritual and moral (and, in this case, the religious), considered vital by some (Tate, 1996, para. 23) and confused by others (Beck, 1999, pp.153-180), is one that persists and is an issue to which we shall return.

Despite the undoubted Christian connotations behind the word 'spiritual' in the 1944 Act, it is the inherent ambiguity of the word that has ensured its survival in subsequent education acts. As Copley (2000, p.69) points out, 'Rab' Butler and Churchill's understanding of 'spiritual' were not the same. Butler's was a Christian spirituality, whilst for Churchill it was, 'a mixture of citizenship, pride in the community and country, and a sort of muscular aestheticism'. Thus the spiritual, along with the moral and religious requirements of the 1944 Act were intended to make pupils aware of God (as perceived by Christians) and ensure they became decent subjects (Isherwood, 1999, p.80).

It is interesting to note that Canon Hall, Chief Officer of the National Society, revealed in an interview in 1943 'that 'spiritual' was introduced into the Act in preference to 'religious' because Archbishop William Temple thought that nobody would know what it meant and it could come to permeate the whole educational process' (Naylor, 2001, p.8). Given the place of religious instruction and daily acts of

worship in the Act and the confessional nature of both, it seems a somewhat pointless reason for the choice of the word 'spiritual' in place of 'religious'. It is far more likely they were seen as complementary to each other rather than part of a subtle conspiracy (Ferguson, 1981) 'transmuting religion into spirituality' (Naylor, 2001, p.8). Those who framed the wording of the Act were most likely unaware of future debate and controversy over the nature and coherence of 'secular spirituality'.

1.2 Her Majesty's Inspectorate - *Curriculum 11-16*

This vagueness surrounding the meaning of the word 'spiritual' is something of a double-edged sword that can assist as well as prevent agreement as to its purpose, value and meaning in the education system. Is it not enough to believe it is good without having the necessity to define clearly what it means? (Sutherland, 1997, p.19) If it is essentially a benign and harmless requirement its statutory protection will be widely accepted (Hay and Nye, 1998, p.8).

Accepted it was in 1944, and there it remained, essentially unchallenged, until Her Majesty's Inspectorate, in response to the Labour Government's Green Paper *Education in Our Schools: A Consultation Document* (DES, 1977) (itself a follow up to James Callaghan's Ruskin College speech in 1976 which came to be widely regarded as asking, 'What do the nation's schools exist for?'), published their discussion paper *Curriculum 11-16* (DES/HMI, 1977a). Influenced by the formulation of the educational philosopher Paul Hirst (1974), they identified the spiritual as being one of the eight fundamental areas of human knowledge and experience (aesthetic and creative, ethical, linguistic, mathematical, physical, scientific, social and political, and spiritual). In responding to requests to clarify what

they meant by spiritual they attempted to satisfy all viewpoints in a supplementary document (DES/HMI, 1977b) by providing both an all-embracing and religious definition. The first, Wright (2000, p.66) refers to as 'broadly anthropological'. Here the authors of *Supplement to Curriculum 11-16* argue that:

The spiritual area is concerned with the awareness a person has of those elements in existence and experience which may be defined in terms of inner feelings and beliefs; they affect the way people see themselves and throw light for them on the purpose and meaning of life itself. Often these feelings and beliefs lead people to claim to know God and glimpse the transcendent; sometimes they represent that striving and longing for perfection which characterises human beings but always they are concerned with matters of the heart and root of existence.
(DES/HMI, 1977b)

The more explicitly religious definition stated that:

The spiritual area is concerned with everything in human knowledge or experience that is connected with or derives from a sense of God or of gods. Spirituality is a meaningless adjective for the atheist and of dubious use to the agnostic. Irrespective of personal belief or disbelief, an unaccountable number of people have believed and do believe in the spiritual aspects of human life, and therefore their actions, attitudes and interpretations of events have been influenced accordingly.
(DES/HMI, 1977b)

It is possible to appreciate the dilemma of the authors of this document for, if the term 'spiritual' is restricted to a 'sense of God', all those who are unable to make this religious commitment are automatically excluded. Within this number there would be a significant proportion of pupils and teachers, for in the intervening years between the 1944 Act and the publication of this discussion paper, Britain had changed. A drop in attendance at places of worship, increasing secularisation, and the influx of those whose religions were not Christian meant that the use of education to reinforce and further the 'Christianisation' of the population was considered by many to be inappropriate (Bastide, 1992). The inclusivity of the 'anthropological' description was more acceptable to the majority and has paved the way for similar

subsequent definitions. This discussion paper encouraged and gave impetus to the trend to separate the spiritual from the religious whilst, at the same time, giving it educational legitimacy.

1.3 The 1988 Education Reform Act

It was the 1988 Education Reform Act that, yet again, brought the ‘spiritual’ to the fore and confirmed its educational legitimacy. Once more this was a result of lobbying on the part of the Lords. The early drafts of the Act made no mention of the promotion of the ‘spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils’ (Alves, 1991) for the then Secretary of State for Education and Science, Kenneth Baker, did not regard the role of the faith communities as paramount in the framing of the Bill (Baker, 1993, p.207). Even the position of religious instruction (though it is now religious education [RE]) was at first essentially unchanged and still remains outside the National Curriculum. Baker was soon to learn that it was an area he could not quietly pass over. Once the Bill reached the House of Lords a group nicknamed ‘the Tribe’ took the opportunity to ‘re-assert the Christian base for RE and collective worship’ (Copley, 2000, p.71). The main thrust of the debate for two of the key players, Bishop Leonard, the Anglican spokesperson for education, and Baroness Cox, a Conservative peer and practising Anglican, was over the place of RE and collective worship but also reference was made to the ‘spiritual’. The ensuing debate raised the ‘terminological problems’ (Copley, 2000, p.74) that still persist. The outcome was that the ‘spiritual’ had its position and, therefore, its status renewed in legislation that has been reaffirmed in subsequent Education Acts, for example, section 351 of the 1996 Education Act and sections 78 and 99 of the Education Act of 2002. Section 1(2) of the 1988 Education Reform Act required a ‘balanced and

broadly based curriculum which promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school and of society' (HMSO, 1988, p.1).

It is open to question whether or not the requirement for schools to promote the spiritual development of those in their charge made any notable impact on those schools and teachers struggling to come to terms with a prescriptive, demanding and somewhat overloaded National Curriculum (NC). In the years immediately following the introduction of the NC there was no real guidance about the ways schools should interpret, let alone implement, this statutory obligation. Was it, as Copley (2000, p. 76) suggests, to be incorporated into RE and daily acts of collective worship (the latter a duty seldom complied with on a daily basis by the majority of secondary schools), or should it permeate the whole curriculum? Or was it merely a sop towards those who questioned the utilitarian, market driven philosophy behind the NC and a means of showing that the legislators really were concerned about the development of the 'whole child'? This may be a somewhat cynical analysis of the intentions behind and implementation (or lack of it) of the spiritual in the educational landscape of England and Wales and one of the aspects of this research is to discover the views of students and teachers on its place and value in the life of schools and pupils.

1.4 Inspection of the Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural (SMSC)

In effect, the spiritual was a dormant side issue within the mainstream educational debate. There were more important matters for schools than to address explicitly the 'how' and 'why' of spiritual development and to pay it anything more than 'lip service'. This was to change with the 1992 Education (Schools) Act, which

required the ‘spiritual, moral, social and cultural’ (SMSC) dimension to be inspected by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) in England and the Office of Her majesty’s Chief Inspector of Schools in Wales (OHMCI), which was later renamed Estyn. A school’s provision for opportunities for the spiritual development of pupils was now to be scrutinised and a judgement (based on a five point scale) on the quality of this provision was to be made. As Wright (2000, p.68) says, schools would now ‘need – however half-heartedly – to attend to the issue.’

To do this effectively they would need clarification and guidance. The lack of clarity on matters spiritual extended to those who were to inspect as well as those being inspected. It is highly questionable, as this research shows, that subsequent guidance did meet this objective. What was clear was that the inspectorate moved towards inspecting provision or opportunities for spiritual development rather than the measured spiritual performance of pupils (if such a thing can be measured). This did not mean that inspectors were to ignore the outcomes of this provision but the difficulties of doing so were recognized by Ofsted. They claimed that ‘it is not impossible to recognise someone who is spiritually impoverished, morally stunted, socially inadequate or culturally deprived’ (Ofsted, 1994, p.3). In extreme circumstances this may well be the case, but the difficulties in coming to a judgment on the stage of the spiritual development of pupils (or anyone for that matter) is extremely difficult even for the most perceptive of inspectors. (It could be argued that it is marginally easier to determine the other three – moral, social and cultural - in the SMSC quartet.) Assessment or measurement of spiritual development (a phrase which implies growth) remains a contentious issue, and one to which we shall return later. As Naylor (2001, p.10) asks, ‘What is the difference between change, progressive change and development?’

Guidance was forthcoming in the form of discussion papers from the National Curriculum Council (NCC, 1993), Ofsted (1994) and the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority (SCAA, 1995, 1996a). As Copley (2000, p.104) succinctly puts it, ‘Spiritual development was thus in the hands of unelected quangos, to be implemented by untrained headteachers and assessed by school inspectors whose other work was geared towards scoring performance and measuring progress’.

1.5 Discussion Papers

The NCC discussion paper, *Spiritual and Moral Development*, issued in 1993 and later reissued by SCAA in 1995, set the trend for what was to follow from official sources and acquired what Wright (2000, p.68) refers to as a ‘quasi-authoritative status.’ It adopted and further built upon the all inclusive definition and model of spirituality given by HMI (DES/HMI, 1977a, 1997b). Whilst RE and collective worship were important vehicles for its delivery they were certainly not the only ones. Spiritual development applied to ‘all pupils’ and to ‘every area of the curriculum and all aspects of school life’ (SCAA, 1995, p.3). Carr (1995, p.85) argues that this document adopted a ‘scattershot approach’ whereby spiritual education was ‘prised from its exclusive connection with religious education only to be loosely re-attached to almost everything under the curricular sun’. If it was universal it should prove to be acceptable but, in preserving its status and survival, it was distancing it from the exclusive Christian connotations implied in its inclusion in the 1944 Act. Closely linking the spiritual with the moral development of children, it emphasised its fundamental importance both in life and in education. To ignore it was to impoverish the lives of children.

The discussion paper highlighted seven aspects of spiritual development: beliefs; a sense of awe, wonder and mystery; experiencing feelings of transcendence; search for meaning and purpose, self-knowledge; relationships; creativity; and feelings and emotions. Spiritual development becomes a catch-all net that encompasses so many aspects of life that they inevitably apply to every thinking and feeling person. The paper acknowledged that most people could relate to these areas but would differ in the interpretations and meanings that they ascribed to them. Here was a suggestion that spiritual development was a subjective response to common experiences. What might be spiritual for one person might not prove to be so for another.

Building upon its *Framework for the Inspection of Schools* (1993), Ofsted issued a discussion paper, *Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development* (Ofsted, 1994), intended to assist schools and inspectors. Stewart Sutherland, who in the early 1990s was Chief Inspector of Schools, and was later to come up with his own definition of the essence of the spiritual (Sutherland, 1995), believed it was necessary to determine what value a school adds to the personal lives of pupils. The complexity of arriving at a judgment was recognised but not considered an excuse for avoiding making difficult decisions. The Department for Education's advisory circular *Religious Education and Collective Worship* (Circular 1/94 in England and Circular 10/94 in Wales, sections 2-5) issued to schools, drew attention to the concern of the Government that schools were paying 'insufficient attention' to the 'spiritual, moral and cultural aspects of pupils' development' and the need for a 'set of shared values which a school promotes'. With reference to the 'spiritual' the Ofsted discussion paper attempted to meet this concern by reiterating the description of spiritual development given in the Framework for Inspection (Ofsted, 1993). It ran as follows:

Spiritual development relates to that aspect of inner life through which pupils acquire insights into their personal existence which are of enduring worth. It is characterised by reflection, the attribution of meaning to experience, valuing a non-material dimension to life and intimations of an enduring reality. 'Spiritual' is not synonymous with 'religious'; all areas of the curriculum may contribute to pupils' spiritual development (Ofsted, 1994, p.8).

The document once more placed the spiritual firmly in the universal, inclusive camp. Again it recognised there would be 'genuine differences' in approaches to the spiritual. The danger was that something that could mean different things to different people could eventually mean what you wanted it to mean. As Copley (2000, p.76) asks, 'If it is present everywhere, how is this distinguishable from its being nowhere?' Others have called the ubiquitous nature of the spiritual into question. Carr (1995, p. 95) claims it is 'misleading to the point of eccentricity for proponents of spiritual education across the curriculum to suggest spiritual education may occur whenever and wherever.'

In making their evaluation of schools' provision for spiritual development inspectors were guided to look at:

- the values and attitudes the school identifies, upholds and fosters;
- the contribution made by the whole curriculum;
- religious education, acts of collective worship and other assemblies; and
- extra-curricular activity, together with the general ethos and climate of the school (Ofsted, 1994, p.9).

Thus, whilst religious education and collective worship are specifically mentioned as vehicles for providing opportunities for spiritual development (an undoubted link to the religious basis of spirituality found in the 1944 Act) they are by no means the only subject or area of school life making such a contribution.

The SCAA discussion paper, *Education for Adult Life: the Spiritual and Moral Development of Young People* (SCAA, 1996a) added little to the debate but mainly reaffirmed the importance and cross-curricular nature of spiritual development. The definition drew on previous ones, encompassing, as did the others, a wide range of human experience and activity. Indeed, the omnipresent nature of the spiritual, for some, extended to all learning. It strengthened the link between the spiritual and the moral, its inclusive nature and position in education becoming essentially value driven.

The role of the teacher in all this was unclear. Were they ‘spiritual directors’ (Richardson, 1988) or ‘nurturers’ of spirituality? (Erricker & Erricker, 1997) In other words, in the field of spirituality and values, are they teachers or facilitators or both? Did the requirement to provide opportunities for the spiritual development of pupils apply to all teachers no matter what their own subject discipline and personal views? How were schools to address these questions in a real and practical way? There was still confusion and a lack of consensus as to exactly what was meant by ‘spiritual development’ and how it was an integral and important part of a greater shared value system of schools and society. For consistency and some degree of parity of experience it was suggested that there ‘was a need for some common agreement on values’ (SCAA, 1996b, pp.18-19). This recommendation and the call for coherence in the ‘approach to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development’ (SCAA, 1996b, p.19) paved the way for the Forum for Values in Education and the Community which met in 1996. Its remit was (i) to decide whether there were any shared values in our pluralist society and (ii) to decide how schools might be supported in the promotion of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. After extensive debate and consultation common agreement was reached on shared values that all should promote

in a civilized society. These were centred on four areas: the self, relationships, society and the environment. The responsibility of instilling these values in young people lay with society at large but schools clearly had an important contribution to make (SCAA, 1996b)..

The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA), which had by now replaced SCAA, addressed itself to the second part of the remit by producing, after a six month consultation, a pack entitled *The Promotion of Pupils' Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development – Draft Guidance for Pilot Work* (QCA, 1997). Based on a six-step process to create a whole school approach, the pack offered explicit examples of how each subject of the curriculum might promote the spiritual development of pupils (as well as the moral, social and cultural), along with case studies and an illustrative matrix for schools to use in their planning (and a blank matrix for schools to use to construct their policy). In attempting to answer the question, 'What is involved in promoting pupils' spiritual development?' they argued that the following should be encouraged:

- the growth of pupils' spirit, their understanding of their own strengths and weaknesses, their self-respect, creativity and will to achieve their full potential (for the good of themselves, others and society);
- pupils' ability to ask, and try to find answers to life's major questions, including questions about the purpose of life and the existence and nature of God; and

- pupils' acquisition of the knowledge, understanding, skills, attitudes and qualities they need to foster their own inner lives and non-material well being throughout life.

There was undoubtedly an appeal to this draft material that clearly guides schools and exemplifies ideas they chose to adopt. As Best (2000) says, it gives the impression of being rational, systematic and comprehensive and he refers to this approach as the '*Rational Objectivist Model*'. What it also appeared to do was perpetuate the apparent paradox between an individualist model of spirituality and a quasi-governmental, centralised model. Not all were convinced of the universality and efficacy of the model proposed. Whilst Talbot argued that values, unlike personal preferences, are qualities that are in themselves worthy of esteem, Tate says that to be accepted by all they cannot be controversial, 'which doesn't make them any less true' (Talbot and Tate, 1997, p.3), others saw them as falling far short of a Christian worldview, where 'God is banished', that underpins spirituality and where consensus equates with superficiality (Thatcher, 1999, p.40).

Thatcher (1999, p.34) recognises that 'the values of spiritually developed people will be communal values' but argues that the documents produced by the Forum failed to take account of real differences. In doing so they not only separated the past from the present but also facts from values. For many, as we shall see, this lies at the heart of the debate concerning the spiritual and spiritual development – do they retain any coherence outside of a religious (and for some a Christian) context? Thatcher's criticisms have some foundation but unfairly attack the conclusions of the Forum, for it fully recognised that the values that it propagated were not a definitive statement of all the values that society and schools should promote but a common

consensual framework upon which schools and individuals might build. Indeed, Thatcher (1999, p.52) suggests that loving God and loving your neighbour encapsulates what needs to be said about a spiritually developed person. The confessional nature of the first of these requirements results in the same problem that faced HMI in 1977, namely the exclusion of all those who are unwilling to subscribe to religious beliefs.

Thatcher is expecting more than the findings of the Forum were prepared (or intended) to offer. It was not a final solution but rather an attempt to find common agreement on shared values in a pluralist society and wrestle with the question of the place and relationship of spirituality to these values. As Wright (2000, p.120) says, 'its limitations lie in the fact that the values do no more than set the context within which the search for spiritual literacy can take place and do not go on to grapple with the specifics of distinct spiritual traditions.'

Spirituality is also one of the key aspects of the *Framework for Personal and Social Education* which has, from September 2003, formed a compulsory part of the school curriculum in Wales (Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales [ACCAC], 2000). Here the 'spiritual' is one of ten aspects of a person in society and it is worth quoting in full the section on spiritual development, which, we are told:

has two main dimensions in that it is concerned with developing the inner life and motivates us to look beyond ourselves. The former involves the development of personal insight, beliefs and values and encourages pupils to reflect on their experiences, ponder some of the deeper questions of life and search for meaning and truth. Pupils can also be inspired to express those inner feelings using imagination and creativity. The latter dimension recognises the human experience of transcendence which takes us beyond the mundane and material. This can be evoked by a sense of awe and

wonder at the natural world, by the mysteries of life and death, by the limitations of human understanding or by a response to a divine being (ACCAC, 2000, p.7).

The ACCAC guidance is very much in the all-encompassing tradition with the spiritual being a part of what it means to be human. Once more the question arises whether or not all the characteristics listed above fall into the category that we call (and teachers universally regard as) spiritual?

With the changes made to the curriculum in 2008 the guidance given to teachers in the *Personal and Social Education Framework for 7 to 19-Year-Olds in Wales* (Welsh Assembly Government [WAG], 2008b) modified the above definition and enhanced the proximity of the spiritual to the moral. The spiritual no longer had its own heading separate from the moral but was rather combined with it, with the moral now coming before the spiritual in the heading. The traditional SMSC whereby the spiritual took precedence, albeit in position only, is replaced in the framework with ‘moral and spiritual development’ (WAG, 2008b, p.13). The subsequent guidance for key stages 2, 3, 4 and post-16 places a great deal of emphasis on rules and values. It is not until Key Stage 4 that what we are accustomed to regard as the spiritual really come to the fore with reference to questions and issues involving the meaning and purpose of life (WAG, 2008b, p.23a). The description of spiritual development refers to learners being ‘encouraged to reflect on their personal beliefs and values and apply them to their own experiences’ and also being ‘inspired to express their inner feelings using imagination and creativity’ (WAG, 2008b, p.13). Familiar phrases from past papers are reiterated: ‘a sense of awe and wonder’; ‘the mysteries of life and death’ and ‘a response to a divine being’ (WAG, 2008b, p.13). Once more we encounter the inclusivity and universality of the spiritual, but now it is

closely linked to a set of values and morals – personal and shared. We shall further explore the connection made here in the next chapter.

As a possible consequence of the continuing confusion and the changes to the Framework for the Inspection of Schools in 2004, Ofsted published further guidance in March 2004 in an attempt to clarify meanings and provide practical case studies for inspectors entitled *Promoting and Evaluating Pupils' Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development* (Ofsted, 2004). The publication confirmed the importance and centrality of pupils' SMSC development to the educational process along with an acknowledgement of current confusion. As previous discussion papers had realised there was a need to come up with a definition (or rather definitions), which would appeal and be acceptable to as many people as possible. This laudable premise, however, is as fraught with the same difficulties as the previous papers were. Nevertheless, if SMSC is to be inspected and its effectiveness judged, there needs to be what Ofsted terms a 'working definition'. Whilst this is offered on an 'advisory basis only' (2004, p.4) such a definition inevitably comes to be regarded as authoritative by both teachers and those who inspect them and schools will address pupils' SMSC development in accordance with this guidance.

The continuing centrality of SMSC in the education of pupils is partly because it is considered to be something of a panacea to the problems (real and perceived) of society. The Ofsted (2004) paper clearly sees SMSC as at least part of the solution to a list of ills ranging from teenage pregnancy to the failure to vote in elections (p.5). The continued cross-curricular nature of SMSC is a positive aspect of the vision of the role of education in promoting social cohesion put forward by a previous

Secretary of State for Education (Blunkett, 2001). The interconnectedness of the four areas of SMSC is reiterated, especially in the case of the spiritual. Yet, the paper does provide definitions and examples of what inspectors are to look for in each of these areas. In order to achieve Blunkett's aim of creating an 'inclusive society' these definitions need to be acceptable to the majority and refrain from any overtly exclusive interpretation. As such, the universal nature of spirituality is reiterated in the tradition of previous discussion papers.

Spirituality is certainly not seen as the preserve of those of a religious persuasion. Apart from the reasoning that gives rise to the universal definition given in the Ofsted document, the pragmatic implications for inspectors are fully recognised:

The inspection framework must apply to both sets of individuals (those with a strong religious faith and non-believers), and those at all points of the spectrum. It is vital to press towards a common currency of shared understanding (Ofsted, 2004, p.9; my brackets).

Ofsted recognised the necessity of a definition that would act as a 'common denominator' (p.11). This is similar to the conclusions reached by the Forum for Values in Education and the Community (SCAA, 1996b), which produced a common consensual set of values. Such definitions are open to the accusation that they ultimately weaken rather than strengthen the issues they address.

Ofsted (2004) identify three principal elements of spirituality. Thus, the spiritual development of pupils involves:

- the development of insights, principles, beliefs, attitudes and values which guide and motivate us. For many pupils, these will have a significant religious basis;
- a developing understanding of feelings and emotions which causes us to reflect and to learn; and

- for all pupils, a developing recognition that their insights, principles, beliefs, attitudes and values should influence, inspire or guide them in life (p.11).

Here we see the way in which spiritual development is seen as encompassing both the intellectual and emotional development of pupils. It combines the perceived polarisation that currently exists in the debate on spiritual education between the academic study of spiritual traditions and types of spirituality on the one hand and guided introspection and the explorations of feelings on the other.

The combination of these three elements of spiritual development in schools results in the following Ofsted (2004) definition:

Spiritual development is the development of the non-material element of a human being which animates and sustains us and, depending on our point of view, either ends or continues in some form when we die. It is about the development of a sense of identity, self-worth, personal insight, meaning and purpose. It is about the development of a pupil's 'spirit'. Some people may call it the development of a pupil's 'soul'; others as the development of 'personality' or 'character' (p.12).

The above definition practically equates the spiritual with the life-force or essence of a person and in doing so employs a degree of tautology. It is not altogether helpful to say that spiritual development is the development of a pupil's spirit. This is once more a tautological definition. The term 'soul' is as unclear as the term 'spiritual' when one is required to define exactly what the word means. The usual understanding of the word is within a religious context and so the statement immediately proceeds to include those who would prefer a more secular meaning. The result implies that 'soul', 'personality' and 'character' are practically synonymous. This is questionable from not only a theological perspective. Whilst it might be argued that there is no such thing as the first of these no one can deny the

existence of the other two aspects of a person. The difficulty for teachers and inspectors is how to promote and measure opportunities for this development and the success of these opportunities.

The Ofsted paper (2004) tells inspectors that they will need to use their ‘professional judgement’ but it provides them with a list of characteristics pupils are likely to show and a list of things schools might be doing to encourage this spiritual development (pp.12-14). These comprehensive lists paint a picture of a reflective, tolerant and caring person with an appreciation of ‘the intangible – for example, beauty, truth, love, goodness, order – as well as for mystery, paradox and ambiguity’ (p.13). How all this is to be realistically fostered in what is essentially an autocratic institution delivering a centrally controlled curriculum is suggested in the next list. The final point on this list says schools should be ‘monitoring, in simple, pragmatic ways, the success of what is provided’ (p.14). Herein lies the crux of the problem. Do teachers share this broad understanding of spiritual development? Is such a broad understanding really a coherent and accurate description of what is truly meant by spiritual and spiritual development? These questions will be addressed in the forthcoming chapters but first we should look at the meaning of the spiritual in the expanding market of the so-called ‘faith schools’.

1.6 Spirituality and Church Schools

It should come as no surprise that the spiritual and the spiritual development of children are deemed to be central to the educational provision of church schools. As the National Society says, ‘The spiritual development of pupils should lie at the heart of the curriculum of a Church School’ (www.natsoc.org.uk Schools: Curriculum:

Ethos p.1). Spirituality is an integral element of faith as McGethrick (2005, p.108) points out:

Faith has several aspects: first, it consists of a body of knowledge or dogma; second it involves certain practices and celebrations (including feasts and festivals); and third, it has a characteristic spirituality. All of these elements are consistent and reinforce each other in the development of a faith community.

One might expect a clearer vision of the nature of spiritual development than the one provided for community schools and one that is closely allied to faith commitment for one of the characteristics of such a school is ‘paying attention to the spirituality of the school which emerges from its faith base’ (McGethrick, 2005, p.108). The need for such a coherence of vision (and definition) underpins some of the arguments defending the existence of the of so-called ‘Faith Schools’, for, as Brown argues, ‘If Church schools are unable to order themselves so that the opportunities for spiritual development are present and the importance of such development obvious to all then one has to question the value of Church schools at all’ (Brown & Furlong, 1997, p.13).

This may well be the case but the reasons behind the suggested expansion of religious schools in the government green paper ‘*Schools Building on Success*’ (DFEE, 2001) was their positive record in delivering high quality education, parental choice and the diversity of provision. Church schools need to be marketable to parents. Academic success is a significant consideration for many parents when selecting a school but so is the ethos of the school. In many respects the two are interconnected. It is often the case that not only Christians but also followers of other faith traditions ‘will often prefer a school of a religious tradition other than their own to one that has no such link’ (Williams, 2003). Why is this? It is because those who

believe in God and wish to pass this belief on to their children regard a school that subscribes to a religious world-view as preferable to what is perceived to be a state system that is essentially liberal and secular in outlook? As Dummet and McNeil (1981, p.23) say, 'There are great differences between religions, but none of these is so great as the gulf between people who practise a religion and people with no religion at all.' O'Keeffe (1986) in his survey of parental reasons for choosing a Christian or Anglican education showed the importance given to both academic achievement and the wider ethos of the school. Quoting Ball, O'Keeffe's says,

The attraction of the Church school for many parents who choose to send their children lies in the image (and the reality) of the Church school as holding out the "modalities and voice" of the lost world of the grammar school, academic reputation. What many parents seek from these schools is not, or not solely, a religiously grounded education but educational and social advantage (pp.15-16).

Are the motives of the parents religious or do they indicate a desire for a school with strong academic traditions and a clear moral code of conduct? This is difficult to answer and no doubt motivation varies from family to family. The injunction of Canon 798 for Roman Catholic parents to send their children to Roman Catholic schools (where possible) remains.

What then is the underlying vision of the Church school? Whilst both Anglican and Catholic schools share the same Christian ethos which is grounded in religious faith there are tensions of interpretation and implementation. The Catholic school is a community of faith that sees part of its responsibility as communicating the message of Jesus Christ and as such retains a catechetical role in the development of children, a role it shares with home and parish. Not unnaturally there is a tension between what appears to be a confessional approach to education and one that recognises diversity

and inclusivity. This tension and dilemma was recognised by Monsignor Kevin Nichols (1978, p.26) when he said that, ‘catechesis can take the form which respects freedom, encourages growth and personal development.’ Despite the growth of a more liberal outlook from some Catholic schools they are essentially there to act in partnership with parish and family in nurturing the faith. The inherent dangers of fostering ‘critical reflection’ as opposed to ‘handing on the faith in its cultural context’ were acknowledged in the 1981 report to the Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales when it said, ‘The notion of promoting critical reflection in pupils... would encourage questioning rather than loyalty to tradition’ (p.65).

Whilst Anglican schools acknowledge that they share the same belief in what they perceive to be the truth of the Christian gospel (albeit interpreted differently) they are only too aware that a proportion of those attending the school will not necessarily have a strong faith and some pupils may have no religious faith at all. The Church of England’s Church Schools Review Group, chaired by Lord Deering (2000, pp.3-4), fully recognised the reality of this, stating:

Church schools are places where the faith is proclaimed and lived, and therefore offer opportunities to pupils and their families to explore the truths of Christian faith, to develop spiritually and morally, and to have a basis for choice about Christian commitment. They are places where the beliefs and practices of other faiths will be respected Church schools are not, and should not be, agents of proselytism where pupils are expected to make a Christian commitment.

Does this mean that there is little difference between the Church and Community schools in terms of the inclusive nature of spirituality, in that it embraces those with a deep faith and those with no faith at all? There appears to be no significant difference in the guidance that opportunities for spiritual development incorporate the exploration of issues of belief and meaning. Rowan Williams (2003), however, detects

a subtle difference in the model of inclusion that the Deering Report endorsed. For the Archbishop it is the sense of Christian community which underlies (or at least should underlie) all that happens in a Church school, ‘which might be expressed by saying: “You may or may not share these convictions, and you will have experienced some of the results. This should encourage you at least to ask the question on what basis *you* want to defend for common life, loyalty and openness.”’

Spirituality within the Anglican educational tradition shares the essential religious essence of the Roman Catholic tradition, according to Bowness and Carter, but has a different focus. They (1999, p.219) argue that ‘there is a holism about this understanding. Thus the definition of spirituality within educational establishments which have a religious foundation will have a focus which understands the transcendent as divine, though individual members of staff and pupils may not necessarily share a Christian stance – sensitivity is therefore important’. This places it somewhere in between the more confessional interpretation of the Roman Catholic schools and the secular inclusivity of the Community schools. As such Bowness and Carter say that ‘the depth of engagement with spirituality may be expressed as a continuum’ (p.219).

Essentially the values often associated with spirituality in faith schools and institutions should be reflected in the ethos ‘based on shared Christian beliefs, values and concepts, the love of God and the love of neighbour’ (Bowness & Carter, 1999, p.221). This would not only manifest itself in the somewhat nebulous school ethos but also more practical ways such as collective worship, the admissions and discipline policy, and the curriculum (p.221). Many of the practices and policies which result from this faith-based interpretation of spirituality are shared by Community schools and

arise from government directives. As such, in the context of promoting the spiritual in education, 'religion is the optional context for spirituality' whereby the 'religious traditions of the world are much more adequate matrices for spiritual development and practice than personally constructed amalgams of belief and practices' (Schneiders, 2000, p.13; Lawton & Cairns, 2005, pp.253-254). We shall consider the centrality of religion to spirituality in the next chapter and whether or not spirituality without religion lacks coherence.

Chapter 2

Review of Literature

In the previous chapter we have traced the development of the spiritual within the education system of England and Wales since 1944. The relative stability concerning the spiritual in terms of legislation has not been mirrored in terms of the guidance given to schools to help them to deal with the inherent ambiguity of the word. Whilst we may be forced to accept that the term ‘spiritual’ defies precise definition, its place in the education system and the inspection of the effectiveness of its provision has necessitated a working definition, however broad this may be. As we have seen, providers of this guidance were placed in a difficult situation. Changes in society from a predominantly Christian base to a pluralist, multicultural and mainly secular culture that displays a tolerant indifference towards religion challenged their thinking. The result is a broad and inclusive definition which combines both the religious and the secular, but leans heavily towards a spirituality which is not the Siamese twin of religion. It is a definition which implies those who are human are also spiritual, or at least have the capacity for spirituality. In a sense, spirituality has become divorced from religion but still tries to remain on good terms with its partner even though its eclectic nature means it is welcome (at least in theory) at gatherings across the school curriculum and not just in religious education and acts of collective worship.

The world of academia has responded to this quasi-official guidance with varying degrees of approval to downright hostility, exposing the pretence that all agree with the current definitions and guidance. The coherence of the ‘official’ guidance has been challenged and in doing so academics have produced their own

definitions and theories as to what it is that constitutes the essence of good spiritual education, thus implying that current definitions and guidance fail to correspond to what might be termed 'good education'. Thus, their definitions tend to be stipulative or programmatic, reflecting the values and opinions of each individual author (Scheffler, 1960). Whether this has been helpful and filtered down to schools and individual teachers charged with providing opportunities for the spiritual development of their pupils, or whether it has merely added to the confusion or been ignored (more often through a lack of awareness of its existence) is something this research hopes to investigate. Is there an essence of spirituality which can be defined and translated into clear and coherent educational terms that will positively assist those who are currently confused? Is the spiritual really a distinct aspect of a person and an important aspect of his/her development? If it is the case that spirituality is a distinctive sphere of human development, then there clearly should be a place for it in the educational system. Can the school curriculum realistically address a plethora of meanings of spirituality and can spirituality be addressed by all subjects of the school curriculum? Should we extend our working definitions in order to distinguish between 'spirituality', 'spiritual development' (or rather opportunities for spiritual development) and 'spiritual experience'? Should we assume that the fostering of the spiritual and the provision of opportunities for this are good and beneficial for the individual? If the essence of education is, as Matthew Arnold (1932, 2001, p.6) suggested, to transmit the 'best that has been thought and said in the world', is the spiritual still to be regarded as a part of this and therefore integral to the education of pupils? William Temple was in no doubt when he argued that education should be 'primarily spiritual ... rather than primarily intellectual' (Copley, 1999, p.12).

As spiritual development is currently a part of this education, as educators are we are in effect providing pupils with something we believe inherently to be beneficial to their development, but we are unlikely to succeed in this venture if we ourselves are not clear about exactly what it is we are providing. We may well have an intuitive understanding of what spiritual development and spirituality means to us, and therefore think that we have the answers, but this is not the same as structuring opportunities for spiritual development which have a sound educational basis and are applicable to all. Education is not just about providing 'right answers' (assuming there are right answers) but imparting to the children the skills which will allow them to form their own judgements on the foundation of reason and reflection and basing their action, or at the risk of sounding grandiose, their lives on these. If this is the case then spiritual education is as much about method and process as content, and method that is grounded on sound educational principles and research.

If we are to approach the plethora of questions and issues raised above we should not act purely on our own perception of spirituality but rather explore the multi-faceted nature of spirituality with its ubiquitous and changing face. To understand the topic and what it means to be a spiritually educated person we must consider the following:

- the relationship of the spiritual to the moral and religious;
- the clarity and coherence of the range of definitions, for the clearer we are about what it means the clearer we will be about how to incorporate it into an educational programme;
- the extent and types of spiritual experience and the causes or triggers of these experiences;

- the value and benefits of such experiences to the individual and wider society; and
- the question of truth and the importance of this in relation to the spiritual and education.

Much of the above requires us to incorporate a range of disciplines, such as theology, ethics, philosophy, psychology and sociology into our search for answers (assuming they are there to be found) and apply these to both the spiritual in the life of the individual and in the wider context of schools and education. All the aforementioned disciplines have something to contribute to the debate. Once we are clearer about what spirituality and a spiritually educated person are we will still need to know what is the most effective way of enabling pupils to achieve this goal and this requires a knowledge and understanding of educational ideals, aims and the appropriate pedagogy. As such, the aim of this chapter is to present as comprehensive and convincing a picture of spirituality, spiritual experience and spiritual development in current literature as possible, given the amorphous and ‘woolly’ nature of the subject.

2.1 The (in)coherence of the current guidance

As previously stated, the current guidance for teachers on the spiritual in schools is inclusive and cross curricular. It is an aspect of a person (ACCAC, 2000) which requires fostering and there are opportunities for development which schools both can and should provide. It is practically synonymous with character development (Ofsted, 2004) and its essence or fundamental features may be subdivided between: (i) inner understanding and development and, (ii) looking beyond this to the wonder and

mysteries of life and the universe. It is therefore something which is both imminent and transcendent.

2.2 Spirituality and morality

In addition to the above the proximity of the spiritual to the moral, social and cultural in both the legislation and the guidance partly implies that we are perhaps wrong to try and define and explore the essence of spirituality independently of, if not the other three, then certainly the moral. There are those who feel that the spiritual is the leading member of the four. Alan Brown (1997) of the National Society claims that, 'if the "spiritual" is properly and fully addressed, the "moral, social and cultural" will fall into place more easily.' Smith (1999, p.i) endorses this view stating that, 'it can even be argued that if we deal adequately with the spiritual dimension of education the moral, social and cultural dimensions will be easier to provide for.' For Hay (Hay & Nye, 1998, p.39) morality arises out of spiritual insight and, if schools seriously address their responsibilities of fostering spiritual awareness, then children are more likely to 'grow up to be morally responsible members of the community.' Its intimate connection with the moral was emphasised by Tate when he was chief executive of the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority (SCAA): 'Children's spiritual development is so important, as the origin of the will to do what is right' (1996, p.23). It was statements such as this which paved the way for the Forum for Values in Education and the Community which met in 1996. Hull (1996, p.43) alludes to this connection when he argues that, 'Children and young people are educated spiritually when they are inspired to live for others.' Hull draws an interesting comparison between spirituality and the accumulation of wealth (money) for its own sake for when this happens both become 'idolatrous and alienating' (p.42). If we

accept this premise then spirituality in isolation is neither desirable nor appropriate to the classroom situation. This wider community aspect of the spiritual is something the Archbishop of Canterbury stressed in his address to the Religious Education Council of England and Wales (REC) in May 2005 when he said, 'that spirit in the Christian scriptures is usually something to do with a quality of community life and not simply of individual life. And very specifically, the gifts of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament are defined so as those capacities which an individual puts at the service of the community' (REC, 2005). Here introspection alone is a stunted form of spirituality.

Can a person be both spiritual and amoral or even immoral at the same time? According to Hull and Williams the answer must be 'no', but, given the Ofsted and other criteria for defining spirituality, it might be argued that Hitler was a spiritual person with his sense of purpose in life that drove and sustained him, his aesthetic appreciation of the music of Wagner, and his imagination and creativity, however perversely applied. Hitler may also be considered to have what some consider spiritual qualities based on his mesmerising affect on others (Gardner, 1999, p.57). Rabbi Naftali Brawer claims that 'Hitler had very, very deep spiritual yearnings' and that he was a 'hypersensitive man incredibly attuned to spiritual and perhaps evil spiritual matters' (Portillo, 2001). If this is the case then clearly spirituality can be separated from morality for no sensible person would argue that Hitler was a good and moral person. The selection of Hitler as an example of a 'spiritual' person may appear shocking when we consider the heinous crimes he sanctioned but it does serve to illustrate that Hitler, like most people, was not a one-dimensional character, but rather a mixture capable of acts of both kindness and cruelty. As Alasdair Palmer

(2005, p.2) says in his comments on the controversial film *Downfall*, showing Hitler as a man rather than a monster:

We assume that anyone vile enough to commit the hideous crimes which Hitler perpetrated must also be vile in every other dimension. The idea that you cannot really have the most terrible vices without having all of them is strangely compelling, perhaps because we want to believe that evil must penetrate and pollute a person's character down to the smallest gesture.

Such an example, however, does lead us to agree with Smith (1999, p.3) when he says, 'not all manifestations of spirituality are healthy' and 'we should be wary of assuming that all that is spiritual is good.' It also indicates that spiritual experiences do not necessarily transform all aspects of a person's life for the better. 'Inwards' is not necessarily synonymous with 'upwards' (Copley, 2000, p.10). From our 'deepest humanity' comes both evil as well as good (Thatcher, 1999, p.9).

Not all are keen to forge this link between the spiritual and the moral and to do so is 'vague', 'platitudinous' and 'equivocal' (Beck, 1999, p.161). Just as religion and spirituality are not necessarily connected in the eyes of many people (as is recognised by the guidance for schools) neither is spirituality and morality (p.154). Oscar Wilde (1997, p.788) recognised this in what came to be known as *De Profundis*, when he argued in a letter to Lord Alfred Douglas in 1905 that his experience of suffering which he deemed spiritual made him a deeper but not necessarily a better person.

But while to propose to be a better man is a piece of unscientific cant, to have become a deeper man is the privilege of those who have suffered. And such I think I have become.

It was his inner light (the spiritual) which helped him rather than morality or religion (Pearson, 1998, pp.327-328). Others confirm that a spiritual experience may well be (or even should be) transformative, but not necessarily in terms of the moral

betterment of the individual. Gilbert (1998, p.x) in referring to a mystical experience he had asks and answers the question: 'But did it make me a better person? In the moral sense as usually understood, I would answer 'No', but it unquestionably changed me.' What he believed he encountered was the certainty of a reality beyond the world of the senses and this heightened awareness did not alter his moral sensibilities or code by which he lived.

If we subscribe to this tenuous and unpredictable connection between the spiritual and the moral then we are in effect saying that the spiritual is essentially introspective and that spiritual well-being is concerned with our own well-being; and the well-being of others becomes secondary and incidental to our own. An agreed moral code may be desirable but not essential for spiritual growth and development. This is perhaps an excessive and unfair interpretation of the views of those who, like Carr, are merely arguing that spiritual truths are often distinguishable from ethical and moral claims inasmuch as they are not essentially prescriptive (Carr & Haldane, 2003, p.221).

This, I suspect, is an extreme position to which most, including Carr, would not subscribe (see Hull and Williams above). Should not the moral aspect of a person be used as a criterion for assessing the educational value, if not the efficacy, of spiritual development? Indeed, Erricker (1998, p.59) argues that the guidance from bodies such as SCAA indicates that the fostering of spiritual development is directed to a moral end. Wright (2000, p.12) contends that the atrocities of the twentieth century, such as the Holocaust, are icons of a spiritual, rather than moral, vacuum, thus implying that the spiritual is an antecedent of the moral. Hick (1999, p.8) shares

the premise that it is the spiritual which leads to a 'clarity of moral vision'. There are, however, as we shall see, those who affirm their moral responsibilities whilst denying their spiritual nature. We might well reverse the question in our search for the connection (if any) between the spiritual and the moral, and ask: what makes the moral spiritual?

Inevitably, our environment, cultural heritage, religious persuasions and even gender and biological makeup impinge upon, and to some extent determine, our experience and interpretation of the spiritual (and life itself). There is, as Isherwood (1999, pp.80-89) points out, a link with societal values and morality but also an inherent contradiction in conforming to these for spiritual development is the encouragement of an awareness of uniqueness. Is it uniqueness within prescribed limits? As far as schools are concerned (and even society in general) we might say 'yes' in terms of behaviour, but 'no' for private beliefs. The two, however, are interconnected, for our beliefs often determine our behaviour and play a major part in our understanding of right and wrong. Zohar and Marshall (2000, p.9) claim, not altogether convincingly, that it is our spiritual intelligence (what they refer to as SQ) that enables us to recognise existing values and discover new ones. For them spirituality that is solely introspective is an indication of 'spiritual dumbness' and a 'mature' spirituality is a concern for the well-being of all sentient beings which extends beyond the immediate group or community in which the person finds himself (pp. 228-232). Whilst one might subscribe to the essence of Zohar and Marshall's conclusions they do tend to wrap their arguments in what reads like an eclectic 'New Age' pseudo-religious philosophy, often building stereotypical 'men of straw' who are easy to knock down. Nevertheless, there is a danger of applying an outdated

Cartesian dualism to our search for the spiritual which will place the spiritual in the realm of introspection and personal musing at the expense of personal deeds and action. This is something the guidance from the likes of the National Curriculum Council's discussion paper is possibly guilty of perpetrating (Crompton, 1998, p.34) but has been rectified to some extent in the *Personal and Social Education Framework for 7 to 19-Year-Olds in Wales* (WAG, 2008b). As Wright (1998, p.22) says, the 'whole person' involves action and not just passive reflection and the spiritual is surely concerned with the 'whole' person.

Action and reflection are invariably interconnected (though the latter may not always precede the former) and often what we consider to be moral action is based on a personal consideration of a range of issues and possibilities. Indeed, Wright (2000, p.65) has discerned a shift towards the 'liberalisation' of moral education which encourages 'children to make autonomous moral decisions through a process of values clarification' rather than blindly conform to 'the authoritarian imposition of a Christian world-view'. This move towards 'liberal individualism' is a view shared by Carr (Carr & Haldane, 2003, p.213). Thus, there seems to be a similar bias towards introspection in moral development (moral relativism as opposed to moral realism) as there is in the realm of spiritual development. Indeed, there are those who argue that the confusion and lack of clarity which surround the spiritual are also present in moral education (Wilson, *et al.* 1969), but this is not the place to embark upon a detailed survey of the nature of moral education or to explore the essence and complexities of moral philosophy.

To return to our ‘chicken and egg’ conundrum: in what sense does the spiritual enhance moral views and actions and are the latter necessary for authentic spiritual development? For the likes of McGhee (2003, pp.26-39) the spiritual involves a higher kind of moral understanding and awareness and for Jacobs (2003, pp.55-66) and Sherman (2003, pp.67-80), basing their views on the Aristotelian conception of virtuous conduct, spirituality completes and perfects virtue. Thus, for some, the spiritual enhances moral action and thinking. Others, such as Haldane (2003, p.14), argue that the spiritual is not primarily concerned with moral actions towards others but rather a person’s interpretation of experiences or, as he puts it, ‘what personal demeanour one develops in the face of reality as one understands it.’ Here the spiritual is our perception and understanding of life’s experiences and not reducible to ethics (p.19), though it is difficult to say whether it is the experiences which give rise to a spiritual interpretation or an inherent predilection towards the spiritual which causes us to interpret experiences in the way in which we do.

There is no doubt a correlation and mutual dependency between events and our personal persuasions in our interpretation of them. It is a question of how we see and experience the world - what Wittgenstein (1983, p.193) alluded to as ‘seeing as’ (Dunlop, 1984) and Hick (1963, pp.71-72) as ‘experiencing as’. Those with the inclination to do so will ‘see’ or ‘experience’ events and actions in a spiritual way, both confirming and contributing to their own spiritual nature and development. Equally there are those who will not. The question remains: does this add (in the sense of improving) anything to a moral action and thus raise it to a higher plane? Should we add another level, namely the spiritual, to Kohlberg’s (1984) proposed sequence of stages of moral development which begin with the two stages of egoism,

followed by stages of conventionalism, contractarianism, consequentialism, and finally (or penultimately if we add this extra layer) a Kantianism which emphasises universal laws? (Kohlberg did consider that there might be a seventh stage, namely Transcendental Morality or Morality of Cosmic Consciousness, but given the difficulties of evidencing his sixth stage of development he considered this seventh stage as purely speculative.)

The same question might be asked of the relationship between motive and intention and action. Is an action only truly moral and worthy when the intention and motives of the person are noble or should the consequences of actions colour our judgements? If we adopt a religious perspective for spiritual and moral actions, then we might subscribe to the Hindu teaching of disinterested action (*niskama Karma*) found in the Bhagavad-Gita (Zaehner, 1973; Chaudhuri, 1984, p.263) emphasising the intention rather than the consequences of actions. The trouble with this, as we shall see when we look at the relationship between the spiritual and religion, is again the variety of interpretation both within and across religions.

We are, however, in danger of becoming sidetracked and need to return to the central issues of the relationship between the spiritual and the moral. McGhee (2003, p.28) helps us refocus the argument when he suggests that there is clearly a connection between the moral and the spiritual, for without the moral the spiritual is enfeebled and attenuated. Indeed, he prefers to place the moral before the spiritual and feels this should be the case in current guidance to schools (something which has occurred with the Welsh Assembly Government's PSE framework, 2008). Thus, the spiritual adds an extra dimension to the moral. Two people may perform the same

action but the intention of one may be ‘superior and more refined’ (McGhee, 2003 p.27) than the other. As an example he cites the compassion of Christ with our own (p.28). To view the action from a spiritual perspective gives a superior vantage point to the person concerned. Morality thus ‘ascends towards and transforms itself into the “spiritual” in a single line of development, and so locks them together’ (p.27). Unlike Haldane (2003), who focuses on experience rather than conduct, McGhee sees conduct as a criterion for assessing the spiritual (p.31). In terms of education and the place of both the spiritual and moral in schools this seems the preferred option, but does this mean that the spiritual needs the moral more than *vice versa* in order to measure the success of the opportunities provided?

From this it might be suggested that the spiritual does need the moral and it is one of the aims of this research to investigate the views of teachers and students on this relationship. Inasmuch as morality makes us consider others and our actions towards them, it helps us to ‘transcend egoism’ (Hull, 2002, p.174) and selfishness. This would clearly require noble rather than selfish motives or intentions behind actions. Spirituality without morality is narrow and self indulgent. As Griffiths (2002, p.33) says, ‘spirituality deprived of real moral authority ceases to be a guide to social responsibility’. This does not mean total compliance with the current codes of a country, culture or even religion, for as Hull (2002, p174) says, ‘The spiritual person does not live by duty and obligation but by freedom and joy, qualities which transcend the moral realm’. Much depends on the definition of what the spiritual actually is (and we shall come to this later). This also applies to the other part of the question whether the moral needs the spiritual. Again, it is a question of definitions and these, as we shall see, are based on personal perspectives as much as reasoned

arguments. If spirituality is to be partly equated with motives and intentions, and this is clearly the case for some, the moral actions can also take on a spiritual dimension. The problem with this is the recurring one that what is considered spiritual by one person may not be by another. I suspect that for teachers and schools it is easier to have a shared definition of what constitutes moral development than what constitutes spiritual development. Nevertheless, there are those for whom the distinction is minimal. As Carr (1995, p.89) says, 'to the very considerable extent to which spiritual education must be an initiation into what is true, right or good, then it must also be a sort of *moral* education.' But he goes on to question what makes it more than just moral education.

As we have seen above, our actions (moral and otherwise) are linked to the way in which we see and experience the world, in other words our interpretation of life. To some extent we can agree with McGhee (2003, p.33) when he says that our conduct is 'an expression of our inner or our spiritual state'. I say to some extent because McGhee appears to be treating 'inner' and 'spiritual' as synonymous and inner states are by no means always spiritual. All are in possession of the former, but not all readily acknowledge the latter; neither are they convinced that a 'leap of faith and imagination' necessarily lead to a 'higher kind of life' (2003, pp.33-34). For example, why does a person's capacity for forgiveness and tranquillity in the face of success, failure and injustice necessarily indicate a developed spiritual state rather than just a disposition that leans towards the calm and benign?

For McGhee there are close ties between the spiritual, the moral and the religious, and much of the force of his arguments is linked to the Christian view of the

spiritual life put forward by Paul in his letter to the Galatians where the life of 'faith is active in love' and the spiritual/moral person is guided by the Holy Spirit. There are clearly difficulties here for those of a non-religious persuasion who, with good reason, may find his language of being 'drawn to hear the promptings of Spirit rather than the promptings of the flesh' and 'conforming to the mind of Christ' (McGhee, 2003, p.34) somewhat archaic and Christocentric. To be 'free of the felt oppression of the flesh and the "mutual destruction" that comes in its wake' (p.34) is more akin to the language of the pulpit than academic discourse.

This brings us to the relationship between the religious and the spiritual. Can there be spiritual development independent of religious development? Can a person be spiritual without being religious just as they can be moral without being spiritual? There are those (McGhee, Hull, Williams) who have argued that the spiritual needs the moral, at least in part, as a criterion for evaluating it, but does this apply equally to religion? Or is it rather that religion needs the spiritual for it to be 'genuine' religion?

2.3 Spirituality and religion

If, as we have suggested above, the spiritual in some sense requires the moral as a means of evaluating its authenticity and the moral is in some sense enhanced by the spiritual, can the same be said of religion? We have seen that McGhee (2003, p.28) is in no doubt that genuine spirituality requires both. 'I suggest that any notion of "spirituality" that is conceived independently both of religion *and* of moral life is enfeebled and attenuated.' Not unnaturally, many of those of a religious disposition will tend to identify spirituality with religion. For some the spiritual is the essence of true religion (Toon, 1990; Leech, 1992; Carson, 1996; Sheldrake 1999) and the

spiritual without religion becomes an idiosyncratic self-indulgence. Much of the argument centres on the nature of reality and truth. If we live in a theistic universe, or, to put it simply, if we are created by God and will return to God, then true spirituality will assist the individual in this journey. If this is the case then spirituality is what Cottingham (2003, p.47) calls, ‘a *metaphysically freighted* notion.’ Clearly our attitude towards religion, whether positive, negative or one of tolerant indifference, has implications for the way in which we view and interpret our spiritual lives and development.

Given the religious history of mankind and, more specifically, the religious history of Britain we evidently cannot ignore the role religion has played in forging our understanding of spirituality. As we have seen, when the spiritual was confirmed in educational legislation in 1944 it was coated with Christian connotations. Over time this bond has been weakened but not severed. The desire to retain the spiritual in education posed a problem for those who provided subsequent guidance. Again, as we have seen, the belief in the universal and inherent nature of spirituality necessitated an inclusive definition which allowed for, but did not insist upon, a religious interpretation. The question this raises is: does the notion of spirituality and spiritual development retain any coherence independently of religion? Should the spiritual be ‘tethered’ to, or be ‘untethered’ from religion (Alexander & McLaughlin, 2002, pp.356-373)?

Thatcher (1999, p.4) claims that, ‘it is far from obvious that spirituality without theology is even coherent.’ Carson (1996, p.567) takes a similar view when he suggests that any break of the spiritual from its religious roots is detrimental and

perilous. 'If spirituality becomes an end in itself, detached from the core, and largely without biblical or theological norms to define it and anchor it in the objective gospel, then pursuit of spirituality, however nebulously defined, will denigrate into nothing more than the pursuit of certain kinds of experience.' This view is shared by Stoddart (1982, p.19) when he says 'to attempt to separate the mystical element from religion which is its outward support is an arbitrary act of violence which cannot but be fatal to the mysticism, or spiritual path, concerned.' The implication is that if spirituality has its roots in religion then the plant of spirituality will die if it is severed from this source of sustenance. Any serious study of spirituality cannot ignore religion and, as Wright (2000, p.27) says, 'we cannot afford to bracket out religious issues when attending to spiritual education'. Indeed despite the cross curricular nature of spirituality, guidance provided by Ofsted and Estyn to those assigned to inspect SMSC in schools explicitly directs them to religious education lessons and acts of collective worship or school assemblies as one of their primary sources of evidence for the provision of opportunities for spiritual development. Thus, any critical study of spirituality must make reference to religion. Religion is a necessary contributor to the debate and some would argue an important catalyst to spiritual development. Watson (1993, p.83) argues that 'true religion makes spiritual progress easier because it provides a vocabulary, a structure and community, all of which can help people attend to this dimension. Religion also provides many inspiring examples as well as yardsticks to chart progress'. Watson is no doubt correct with the inference that the language and concepts of the debate on spiritual development in schools has borrowed much from religion (see Hay and Nye, 1998, p.89). When people are asked to define what they mean by 'spiritual' and describe experiences they deem to be spiritual, they will often employ the language associated with religion. Part of the

reason for this, Hay (1998, p.39) suggests, is that ‘no obvious alternative to religion has emerged with sufficient power to act as a vehicle for the nurture of spiritual awareness’. How close these ties are is something this research will investigate.

Religion and spirituality are not necessarily synonymous, as the guidance from governmental bodies constantly reminds us. Much of the debate centres on the problem of definitions (which we shall examine under 2.4). Gollnick (2003b, p.72), following Willam James’s logic, says ‘if our religion is our total reaction to life, then our total reaction to life is our religion.’ If we accept this contention, then religion, like spirituality, is universal since all of us react to life. Whilst James (1928, p.31) does adopt a broad brush stroke to his interpretation of religion and religious experience, he does accept that the definition he offers of religion as, *‘the feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine’*, is somewhat arbitrary and all embracing. As James (p.35) says, ‘but so very broad use of the word “religion” would be inconvenient, however defensible it might remain on logical grounds.’ The same logic can be applied to the spiritual; inclusive and eclectic definitions may well be justifiable, but are they helpful? The way in which we interpret the experiences of life, however, is the root of the problem. For one person’s religious experience is another’s figment of the imagination or profound aesthetic encounter with the marvels of life. What one sees as an encounter with the Divine another sees as an encounter with the mysteries of the Self. Religion then, as Copley (2000, p.139) says, is but ‘one coat spirituality might wear.’

Once more we return to definitions, for some see the Self as the location of the Divine in humankind. Added to this, ‘authentic’ religion is not necessarily the same

as institutional religion. What all this implies requires further explanation. The advance of secularism, itself an ill-defined term, with its attack on the supernatural and focus on this world and life, drove some theologians to attempt in very different ways wither to assert the reality of God as a revealed truth to be accepted (Karl Barth) or to seek new ways of talking about God (for example, Martin Buber, Emil Brunner, Reinhold Niebhur, Richard Niebhur, Paul Tillich, John Macquarrie). For Buber the 'I-Thou' relationship between man and God takes place in everyday experiences and for Tillich God is being-itself or the Ground of Being. God thus becomes immanent in all life and experience and whilst Being itself (God) transcends every finite being, 'there is no proportion or gradation between the finite and the infinite' (Randell, 1952, p.160). Thus, the cause and object of spiritual experience is God. This is a view expounded by Hick (1999) and Bowker (1995).

If we identify God with the centre of our being, as Zohar and Marshall (2000, pp.90-197) appear to suggest, then knowing about this centre is the key to raising what they refer to as SQ or spiritual intelligence (p.156). The credibility and persuasiveness of their arguments are not altogether convincing and the use of quantum theory to support their reasoning often reads like pseudo-science.

I pointed out that the vacuum (quantum) is the ultimate transcendent reality describable within physics. It is the still, silent 'ocean' on which existence appears as 'waves' (oscillations of energy). The first thing to emerge from the vacuum is an energy field known as the Higgs Field. This is filled with very fast, coherent oscillations that are the origin of all fields and fundamental particles in the universe. It is in itself a huge Bose-Einstein condensate. If proto-consciousness *is* a fundamental property of the universe, then there is proto-consciousness in the Higgs Field, and the quantum vacuum becomes very like what the mystics have called the 'immanent God', the God within all. In that case the 40 Hz neural oscillations that result in human consciousness and our spiritual intelligence have their roots in nothing less than 'God'. 'God' is the true centre of the self. And meaning has its origins in the ultimate meaning of all existence (pp.89-90).

As attractive as this may be to apologists of religion and those who enlist ‘science’ to add credibility to their arguments, it is not convincing for those who reject the reality of God. In a radio broadcast, *Devout Sceptics* (2001), Jonathan Miller is wary of what he calls, ‘the crouching clergyman hiding in the bushes’ ready to tell him that he really is religious every time he refers to experiences of awe and wonder at the beauty and mystery of life. So, too, we must beware of ‘creeping spirituality’, whereby we impose our conception of spirituality on those who neither want it nor are ready to receive it. Experiences may be similar but their attribution differs. It is similar to Weber’s and Tillich’s definition of religion as ‘any set of coherent answers to human existential dilemmas – birth, sickness or death – which make the world meaningful... The implication of this definition is that all human beings are religious, since we are all faced by the existential problems of disease, aging and death’ (Abercrombie *et al.*, 2000, p.297).

There are two fundamental flaws in the argument that spirituality only retains coherence within a religious framework. These are:

1. The assumption that there is coherence within and between religions.
2. The denial of authentic spiritual experience and development to those who reject the fundamental tenets of all religions.

2.3.1 Confusion within and between religions. Spirituality or implicit religion?

Firstly, it is false to think that placing spirituality in a religious context adds to its coherence. Apart from the obvious differences between religions and the way in which they interpret what they perceive as reality, each religion is far from a monolithic entity. Whilst the origin of the term ‘spiritual’ may have its home in

religion and each religion espouses the spiritual path, King (1997, p.495) rightly points out that ‘each religious tradition knows many different schools of spirituality, and past and present spirituality are not necessarily the same, not even in the same religion.’ Chronological and cultural contexts result in a variety of spiritual paths. (See Barrett, 2001, for a survey of new religious movements which adds to the diversity of spiritual paths presented by the so-called traditional or principal religions of Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and Sikhism.)

Undoubtedly, there is consensus as well as contradiction between and within religions. Nevertheless, to select strands, no matter how popular, of the various traditions to arrive at a common notion of spirituality will not do. The contradictions that are inevitably found in the study of religions are so deep and profound that any attempt at a synthesis of religious spirituality is doomed to failure. To concentrate on common elements is no doubt both a laudable and positive approach, but is fraught with the danger of all such liberal attitudes – that of ignoring the deep seated convictions of many of the conservative or radical adherents of the religions in question. As Smart (1974, p.675) says, ‘Unity is bought at a price of preaching a doctrine which the majority of religious men in their different faiths would not accept as the right interpretation of their heritage.’ Is not Schweitzer (2005, p.110) nearer the mark when he asserts that ‘religion is no longer seen as a unifying bond. Instead it is often considered to be divisive, at least potentially.’

Indeed, it has even been suggested that there is a distinction between male and female spirituality with religions promulgating what is essentially an androcentric spirituality. There is some truth in Isherwood’s (1999, p.82) assertion that, ‘the

spiritualities of the major faiths have served masters, not mistresses and their dispossessed children.’ She argues that ‘since spiritual traditions have been largely developed by men it is unsurprising to find that they contain a great deal of male psychology wrapped up as divine truth’ (p.83). Her belief that there is common theme running through women’s spirituality, however, is an assumption that is not credibly substantiated and one is left wondering if we are following a polemic against men rather than a rational line of thinking. Where is the evidence for statements such as the spiritual experience of women being based on ‘a vision of mutuality, celebration of the flesh and an embrace of the cosmos’ (p.82) or, ‘the essence of feminist spirituality is wild, erotic engagement with our bodies and through them with the world’? (p.86) (It is, however, interesting to note that research by Jackson [1997, p. 233] found that women scored significantly higher on the Numinous Experience scale of spiritual experience than men did – see later 2.5 *the extent of spiritual experiences*.) Nevertheless, is the picture of feminine spirituality, painted by some (King, 1995, p.187), with its emphasis on the experiential, experimental and search for connectedness and wholeness, closer to what is seen as spiritual development in schools than the traditional religious models? Will this research reveal a marked distinction between the responses of male and female students and teachers?

Can these criticisms be countered by suggesting that the differences between religions lie at an institutional level and ‘authentic’ religion is an inner experience and relationship with God which the individual may or may not choose to express through conventional (or even unconventional) religious organisations? Is it the case, as Zohar and Marshall (2000, p.10) suggest, that SQ makes religion possible (perhaps even necessary) but does not depend on it?

There has been a marked decline in church attendance in Britain in recent years. To some extent this decline has been mirrored across Europe and even mainline churches in North America. Using Davie's (1994) *Religion in Britain Since 1945: Believing Without Belonging*, Wright (2000, p.50) says 'at first glance the evidence regarding religious community membership appears to contradict the notion that we live in a predominantly secular and pluralistic society' with about 71 per cent of the British population claiming membership of a religious community. This apparent religiosity is, however, as Wright (p.51) points out, somewhat superficial and nominal with only 15 per cent claiming to practise their religion on a regular basis. A BBC (2000) survey on belief in Britain at the turn of the century revealed that traditional religion is in sharper decline than we might have previously thought. Within the last fifty years there has been a marked change in the religious landscape of Britain. Forty-five per cent of the population never go to church and 50 per cent go once a year. Even the 69 per cent, who still use the church for significant turning points in their lives such as weddings, represents a drop of 10 per cent in ten years. Despite this only 8 per cent regard themselves as atheists and raw figures do hide significant variations (McGrath, 2007, p.20; Wynne-Jones & Craig, 2007, pp.19-20). Streib (2005, p.134), using the Shell surveys (1985, 1992, 2000) and other research databases (Schmidtchen, 1997; Pollack, 1996), documents a decline of church membership in Germany and shows how the German churches 'have reason to be concerned about membership stability of the younger generation, especially in the East.' Again, there has been a marked decline in church attendance by adolescents from 59 per cent in 1953 to 16 per cent at the end of the century (Streib, 2005, p.134). Across the Atlantic the seeming religious fervour of the Americans is mainly confined to the charismatic

and Pentecostal churches. There has been a noticeable drop in church membership of the so-called mainline churches in the United States (Naisbitt & Aburdene, 1999), and Bibby (2002) has recorded parallel trends in Canada. These writers and surveys also note that this waning of traditional and recognisable expressions of religiosity has not been mirrored in the search for the spiritual. In 1990 56 per cent of the population in Britain called themselves religious and, whilst this fell to 27 per cent in 2000, in the same year 31 per cent referred to themselves as spiritual (BBC, 2000). McGrath (2007, p.20) claims 'organised religion may be in decline, yet a concern for spirituality remains important for many' and Thatcher (1999, p.1) asks: 'is there an inverse relation between increased secularization and increased attention to spirituality?'

Streib (2005) shows how religiosity amongst adolescents is not necessarily diminishing but merely changing. Forty-five per cent think Britain would be a worse place without traditional religion (BBC, 2000). There is a transformation in the ways in which religion is expressed. Essentially, there is a greater emphasis on individual practice and preferences, one of the corollaries of which is that religious expression becomes more invisible and difficult to quantify. Streib (p.139) asks, 'how can we characterize the new way of searching for religion or of being religious, and what is the better label: religion or spirituality?' As Francis (2005, p.8) points out, for Streib the 'spiritual quest' is the 'key to understanding the changing nature of adolescents' religiosity'. There appears to have been a paradigm shift in the search for the sacred and for meaning in life from the religious to the spiritual. The search is still there but the labels have changed.

This new generation of ‘spiritual seekers’ has been characterised by Beaudoin (1998, p.178) as Generation X. He shows how this Generation X adopts an *a la carte* approach to religion and spirituality, ‘forever recombining and forming new spiritualities’. This he identifies as irreverent ‘bricolating’ (from the word *bricolage* which means making do with materials at hand to solve particular problems and questions, in this case religious). Roof (1993; 1999) has also shown how the baby-boom generation remain deeply interested in spirituality despite dropping out of organised religion. An example of this consumerist approach to religion and spirituality was epitomized in the Channel 4 television series *Spirituality Shopper* (2005) where three non-believers were allowed to try out various religious practices for a month to see if they would help to solve their modern-day problems (BBC, 2005, p.39). This ‘designer spirituality’ was seen by many traditionalists as a trivialisation of faith but was defended by its presenter, the athlete Jonathan Edwards, as providing an opportunity to take ‘non-religious people who think there is something missing in their lives and trying to find ways to live better’ (Petre, 2005, p.8).

Within this shifting religious and spiritual landscape Gollnick (2003a, p.147) detects ‘the emergence of the concept of *implicit religion*, which refers to whatever functions like a religion, even though it does not appear to be a religion as conventionally understood.’ Baily (2002, p.67) shows how such a broad and encompassing definition, with its emphasis on commitment, can embrace ‘secular faith and spirituality’. So is implicit religion, as Gollnick (2003a, pp.146-160) asks in the title of his article, spirituality is disguise? We shall deal with the plethora of definitions in the next section, but Gollnick (p.156) shows how implicit religion has

much in common with certain forms of spirituality such as the way in which they both address questions of 'identity, values, worldview and meaning' without necessarily referring to organised religion.

There is much in common with the inclusive interpretation of religion referred to above, as the search for the transcendent within the self, but without the necessity of calling upon traditional religion to authenticate and validate the experiences. The advent of this humanistic spirituality is, for some, a positive development (Elkins *et al.*, 1988; Elkins, 1998) and for others a dangerous trend (Zinnbauer *et al.*, 1999) where spirituality is seen as 'good' and religion as 'bad'. Pinker (1998, p.555) claims that 'religion cannot be equated with our higher, spiritual, humane, ethical yearnings (though it sometimes overlaps with them).' Whether this polarization is prevalent in the thinking of teachers and students will be examined in this research. Is it the case, as Hood (2000, cited Gollnick, 2003a, p.151) claims, that most people identify themselves as both religious and spiritual, and it is only a minority, albeit a significant number, who identify themselves as spiritual without being religious, or rather holding negative views about religion?

There are undoubtedly similarities between the religious and the spiritual search, and this is reflected in the guidance given to schools from the various educational bodies cited in the first chapter. Both encourage thinking about the meaning and purpose of life and the values by which we live. These are what Wright (2000, p.104) refers to as 'ultimate concerns', and are undoubtedly an important component of religious education. The conclusion to this search for answers to these 'ultimate questions', if one is ever reached, may result in the embracing or rejection

of religious views. The distinction between the religious worldview and the secular one is, as Gollnick (2003a, p.152) points out, in this search for answers and meaning. Religious spirituality is directed towards a transcendent reality (God?) whereas the 'non-religious' 'spirituality tends to downplay or reinterpret the aspect of transcendence, in favour of a focus on the human spirit and a sense of wholeness'. This search and questioning are intrinsic to the human condition, and it is the development of these critical thinking skills and reflection on meaning and value rather than the conclusions which are important in an educational context. As stated above, the similarities between 'implicit religion' and spirituality are the ways in which they both address questions of meaning, identity, values and worldview without 'reference to, or justification by, organized religion' (Gollnick, 2003a, p.156). This often makes them indistinguishable from each other even though they may be different from traditional religious spirituality (p.158). Despite the commonality Gollnick (p.158) says he is able to discern the differences.

There are however two features which may separate implicit religion from spirituality, especially from more traditional spirituality. The first is that spirituality usually involves a recognition that our everyday world is part of, and derives meaning from, a wider spiritual universe. This may be lacking in some implicit religions. The second feature is that spirituality often carries the connotation of self-reflection on the elements of one's identity, values and worldview, whereas these remain out of awareness in implicit religion.

Religion then may be seen by some as a dimension of spirituality but not a necessary one, whilst to others spirituality is but one of the many dimensions of religion and not always the most important. Wright (1999), whilst acknowledging the autonomy of spiritual experience, alerts us to the dangers of asserting the primacy of spiritual experience as the source and assessment of the validity of the claims of traditional religion. He points out how creeds make claims about the true nature of

reality and the source of these claims (at least in the Christian tradition) is not spiritual experience but the revelation of God in history (p.19). This runs counter to the arguments of the likes of Hardy (1966, 1979), Hay (1987) and others who point to a generic spirituality which is integral to man. Wright charges them with the adoption of a liberal perspective which sees 'the historical faiths as the cultural expression of personal religious experience' (Hay, 1982, p.48). Wright (1999, p.22) argues that 'the writings of the early Church Fathers would quickly reveal that they consciously and deliberately derive their doctrinal teaching not from any inner religious experience, but from what they believe to be God's historical revelation attested in Holy Scripture.' Indeed, Wright (1999, p.19) shows how the introspective approach to spirituality which is currently fashionable in many schools (see later under sub-heading 2.8 *Spirituality and Education*) has inherent dangers:

The Christian tradition consistently teaches that the process of turning inward and trusting inner feelings and experience leads not to God, but an encounter with the fallen nature of humanity. The trusting of inner feelings represents a reliance not on divinity but on human corruption and sin.

One need not have a profound spiritual experience to believe in the tenets of religion and many people of faith base their beliefs on the teachings and experiences of others. Indeed individual experiences have not only confirmed orthodoxy but also given rise to heresies.

There is clearly a danger, as we saw in the last section – 2.2 *Spirituality and Morality*, of categorising all spiritual experiences as good and educationally desirable. Perhaps, as we suggested earlier, the moral dimension is an expedient means of measuring the appropriateness of spiritual experience and development in schools (and life in general).

This view is encapsulated by the Dalai Lama when he says:

In calling for a spiritual revolution, am I advocating a religious solution to our problems after all? No. ... I have come to the conclusion that whether or not a person is a religious believer does not matter much. Far more important is that they be a good human being.

I say this in acknowledgement of the fact that though a majority of the earth's nearly six billion human beings may claim allegiance to one faith tradition or another, the influence of religion on people's lives is generally marginal, especially in the developed world. It is doubtful whether globally even a billion are what I call dedicated religious practitioners, that is to say, people who try, on a daily basis, faithfully to follow the principles and precepts of their faith. The rest remain, in this sense, non-practising. Those who are dedicated practitioners meanwhile follow a multiplicity of religious paths. From this it becomes clear that, given our diversity, no single religion satisfies all humanity. We may conclude that we humans can live quite well without recourse to religious faith (Tenzin Gyatso, the Dalai Lama, 2001, pp.19-20).

2.3.2 Spirituality and the rejection of religion.

'Human beings can live quite well without recourse to religious faith' (Tenzin Gyatso, 2001, p.20) but can they live without a healthy spiritual aspect to their lives? We shall examine the extent and value of spiritual experience and development later, but, if we assume, as many do, that such experiences are an integral part of being human, then clearly they are 'an aspect of a person in society' (ACCAC, 2000, p.7) irrespective of a person's religious persuasions (or lack of them). This brings us back to what we considered the second fundamental flaw in 'tethering' spirituality to religion. This is the denial of authentic spiritual experience and development to those who reject the fundamental tenets of all religions and thus impose limitations on the numbers of those capable of attaining spiritual awareness (Grimmitt, 1987, p.182). The Dalai Lama draws the distinction between religion, to which some but not all subscribe, and spirituality, which all should cultivate.

I believe there is an important distinction to be made between religion and spirituality. Religion I take to be concerned with faith

in the claims to salvation of one faith tradition or another, an aspect of which is acceptance of some form of metaphysical or supernatural reality, including perhaps an idea of heaven or *nirvana*. Connected with this are religious teachings or dogmas, rituals, prayer and so on. Spirituality I take to be concerned with those qualities of the human spirit – such as love and compassion, patience, tolerance, forgiveness, contentment, a sense of responsibility, a sense of harmony – which brings happiness to both self and others. ... I sometimes say that religion is something we can perhaps do without. What we cannot do without are the basic spiritual qualities (Tenzin Gyatso, the Dalai Lama, 2001, pp.22-23).

The qualities listed by the Dalai Lama are both laudable and desirable, and ones to which most teachers would subscribe and schools wish to promote amongst their pupils. Whether or not they are spiritual values as opposed to just values is a matter of debate. Marilyn Mason (2000, p.2), the Education Officer of the British Humanist Association, whilst applauding the way in which the Dalai Lama distinguishes the religious from the spiritual, takes up this point: ‘Humanists and many others, would not necessarily want to call those essential human qualities which contribute to the happiness of oneself and others “spiritual”. I would prefer to categorise many of the qualities listed by the Dalai Lama as moral or emotional’. Mason (p.2) goes on to argue that the word ‘spiritual’ is often used, ‘to give a spurious respectability and status to quite ordinary ideas or emotions, together with an aura or mystery’. Nevertheless, there are those who wish to assent to the importance of the spiritual in their lives whilst rejecting religion. Humanists are split between those who are irked by the perceived hijacking of the word by religious people and those who feel they would be better off without a word which carries ‘so much religious and pseudo-religious baggage’ (p.7). So it is also the case that the lack of uniformity found in and across religions is found in atheistic life stances. Williams

(2004) was right to point out that it is erroneous to speak of atheism as ‘a self-contained system’.

This mix of views is mirrored in our schools, and to reject a spiritual aspect to a person who is not religious is, I suspect, to disenfranchise a significant number of pupils who hold no religious beliefs and may well have no desire to do so. This is not the same as saying that children do not need to be acquainted with religious traditions as part of their education. Indeed, for coherence, balance and an understanding and exploration of the spiritual, the place of spirituality in religious traditions must be incorporated. It does assume, despite the objections of some, that there can be a non-religious spirituality and that schools can offer opportunities for spiritual development to take place. This is the view of the plethora of documents offering guidance to schools (see chapter 1). As Taggart (2002, p.60) says, the curriculum guidance affirms spirituality as something expressed in religious tradition but not exclusively so. Carr (2003, p.215) acknowledges that it is with good reason that these documents have attempted to decouple spirituality from religion; for to suggest otherwise, as stated above, would be to deny spirituality to the non-religious. The thinking behind these documents Carr refers to as ‘attitudinal’ or ‘post-modern’, but they do illustrate that religion does not have a monopoly on spirituality. This is not to say that children cannot approach and respond to matters spiritual from a secular and/or religious perspective but it is being given the opportunity to do so which is important. As Schweitzer (2005, p.107) says,

I have tried to establish the understanding that there are questions which arise in the life of all children and which possess at least potentially religious meaning. These questions are sometimes called the “big questions” because they refer to matters of life and death or to the meaning of life. They indicate that the spiritual or religious dimension is indeed a fundamental dimension in the

process of growing up and that this dimension should not be neglected.

So do spirituality and spiritual development in schools constitute the provision of opportunities and encouragement of pupils to reflect on these ‘big questions’ and in doing so arrive at their own conclusions? Perhaps this is the link between the religious and the spiritual for it was the twentieth-century Jewish mystic Rabbi Abraham Heschel who said: ‘We are closer to God when we are asking questions than when we think we have the answers’ (cited Zohar & Marshall, 2000, p.15). A more inclusive rewording of this may be: *We are closer to the spiritual when we are asking questions than when we think we have the answers.*

Lawton and Cairns (2005, p.256) show how pupils should be encouraged critically to question and consider a range of possibilities both religious and secular:

Neither religious nor secularist confessionism should be our starting-point in education. We should neither assume that there is a God, nor that there is not, but rather convey the supreme importance of the question. We need to encourage pupils towards evaluation of all assumptions, secularist as well as religious, and to acknowledge that all positions are confessional. Instead of dogmatically instilling authoritative answers, emphasis needs placing on opening up issues.

Whilst the spiritual may well be closely connected with the moral and the religious, especially, as we shall see, in the minds of many students and teachers, there remains a need to identify what the spiritual is. As Carr (1996, p.161) points out, for spiritual education to be meaningful we should at least attempt to ‘identify precisely what the curricular claims of the spiritual, as distinct from the moral or religious, might be.’ In short we need to consider the working definitions of the spiritual which are both coherent and widely accepted.

2.4 Spirituality – a plethora of definitions.

We have previously examined the way in which various educational bodies have wrestled with the definitions of the spiritual and its place in the education of children. The general conclusions they arrived at are both inclusive and broad. These have been dissected and analysed by a variety of writers who either, in the main, concur with the findings or attack them for their muddled thinking and unhelpful nature. All, however, agree that a precise definition is notoriously difficult to arrive at. As Hardy (1979, p.131) asks in his seminal work, *The Spiritual Nature of Man*, in the chapter entitled ‘What *IS* Spirituality?’: ‘Who would be so foolish as to pretend that he could make such a definitive pronouncement?’ Part of the difficulty is the eclectic nature of the word itself. It is a word the meaning of which most of us intuitively know but for which we find difficulty in offering a precise definition (Sheldrake, 1991) or even coherent description (Raitt, 1987).

2.4.1 Confusion

The phrases used to emphasise the difficulty and confusion associated with the ‘spiritual’ are both colourful and revealing. It is variously referred to as ‘linguistic Lycra’ and a ‘spiritual Esperanto’ (Gay, 1998), ‘a classic case of the Emperor’s clothes’ (Copley, 2000), an ‘applause word’ (Carson, 1996), ‘amorphous’ (Carson, 1996), ‘chimerical’ (Carr, 1995), ‘a weasel word’ and ‘elusive catch-all’ (Brown, 1997), ‘slippery’ and ‘very elastic’ (Gilbert, 1998), ‘ubiquitous’ (Keating, 2001), ‘a universal code word’ (King, 1995), ‘a vague term’ (Hick, 1999), a ‘fuzzy concept’ (Spilka, 1993), ‘ultimately impenetrable’ (Webster, 1990) and ‘ineffable’ (Plunkett, 1990). It is a word ‘destined to remain unfettered by all attempts to codify it’ (Lakhani, 2003). The consequence of all this is the danger of becoming lost in ‘a

cloud of mutual incomprehension' (Hay and Nye, 1998, p.4) with 'much talk of spiritual education liable to be vacuous' (Carr, 1996, p.160) or 'psycho-babble and management speak' (Carr & Haldane, 2003, p.6). As Copley (2000, p.11) says, 'exploration in the field can be likened to plaiting fog.' Grayling (2006, p.43) states a truism when he says 'Mystery and controversy are directly proportional: the less we know about something, the more we argue over it'. This is especially the case regarding spirituality.

The confusion which surrounds the term should provide us with a word of warning in even attempting to elicit a mutually agreed definition. Indeed, it may be the case that the word really does encompass a broad spectrum of meanings with each one being equally acceptable. The result is what Ungood-Thomas (1986, p.7) refers to as, 'an over abundance of meanings' and this is the danger, that the concept becomes meaningless (Markham, 1999, p.143). Vagueness, however, is not necessarily disadvantageous. Carr (1995, p.85) suggests that any successful attempt at a precise definition is well-nigh impossible. This difficulty, he points out, is not just consigned to spirituality but one only has to think of words such as 'freedom, reason, knowledge' and 'truth' (p.85) to see the restrictions of precise definitions. Woods *et al.* (1997, p.25) suggest that any single definition which attempts to incorporate an acceptable meaning in a plural society risks 'producing a bland notion of spirituality with little substantive meaning.' Given the dynamic nature of the spiritual (itself an aspect of any definition) Priestley (1985, pp.36-37) argues that attempted definitions are fruitless and even counter productive. The obvious advantage of this lack of clarity and precision is that the spiritual can become all encompassing and applied to just about every aspect of life. Everything is potentially spiritual. This, as we shall

see, may well be the case, but it begs the question as to the value such looseness of definition has for pupils, teachers and school inspectors. If the spiritual can be present across the school curriculum, as the guidance from DES/HMI (1977a, 1977b), NCC (1993), SCAA (1995, 1996a), QCA (1997), ACCAC (2000), Ofsted (1994, 2004). Estyn (2004) and WAG (2008a) suggest, it becomes increasingly difficult to pin down precisely what it is we are looking for. As Copley (2000, p.76) asks, 'If it is present everywhere, how is this distinguishable from it being nowhere?' It seems as if 'it is becoming exceedingly difficult to exclude absolutely anything from the purview of spirituality, provided there is some sort of experiential component in the mix' (Carson, 1996, p.558).

2.4.2 The need for clarity

If the spiritual for most people is merely the fact that there is something more to life than the material or that it is just a heightened sense of aesthetic or moral awareness it appears to have no distinctive essence and becomes as suggested above a 'catch-all' term (Carr, 2003, p.216). As such it is practically superfluous in adding anything distinctive to life's experiences that other terms such as 'beauty', 'truth' and 'goodness' can do just as well. Is the spiritual merely added in order 'to give a spurious respectability and status to quite ordinary ideas or emotions, together with an aura of mystery?' (Mason, 2000, p.2) Mason goes on to suggest that the spiritual becomes 'not so much a word struggling to express the inexpressible as a word used to sound good and avoid real thinking' (p.2). Indeed much of what Mason says is true but there remains a suspicion for many that the spiritual is something more than just emotions or aesthetic appreciation and ethical awareness, however sublime these may be. It is generally considered to be something above and beyond the normal response

to natural beauty, for example. What writers have to struggle with is just *how* it is more than these, and definitions attempt not only to arrive at the fundamental essence of the spiritual but also to encapsulate in these definitions what it is that makes the spiritual different. Is it not enough to believe it is good without having the necessity to define clearly what it means? (Sutherland, 1995, p.19) But, as Carr (2003, p.219) says in a parody of Wittgenstein's famous saying, 'whereof we cannot speak it is not obvious that we can *educate* either'. On the other hand overly precise definitions run the risk of being too restrictive and excluding what many would perceive as being spiritual.

Despite this it is a word all are familiar with even if they find it difficult to articulate exactly what they mean by it. Carr (1995, p.85) is nearer the mark when he argues that, whilst precise definitions are well-nigh impossible, we do need to have 'a reasonable secure grasp of *meaning* of terms in order that they can be used to any real purpose.' The spiritual remains an integral part of the educational system and has been there since 1944 despite Thatcher's (1991, p.23) assertion that spiritual development is 'an empty and recent concept', though he is lamenting the erosion of its religious foundation and the recent assigning of new meanings to the term. As such it would be a benefit to all concerned in the educational process to arrive at a mutually agreed definition or meaning(s). Wittgenstein (1983) forcibly argues the need for a publicly owned language in order, for in this case the educational community, to engage in a meaningful debate and understanding. As such we should be able to say 'something intelligible about spirituality' (Webster, 1990, p. 357).

Chapter 1 saw that we do to some extent have this in terms of guidance for teachers, and this research will endeavour to discover to what extent this has permeated through to those entrusted with the application of this guidance. It will compare teachers' and trainee teachers' own definitions with the guidance and to what extent they incorporate opportunities for spiritual development of pupils into their teaching.

2.4.3 Range of contemporary meanings

When given an exercise in 'brainstorming' what they mean by the word 'spiritual' (an activity suggested by Hammond *et al.*, 1990 and Wright, 2000, p.8) students reflect the wide variety of interpretations currently given to the word ranging from the religious to the 'New Age' and occult; from the mystical to general techniques for self-improvement and self-fulfilment. The emphasis is usually on an inner experience and perception of life. Beck (1999, pp.163-164) reveals the assortment of meanings and associations carried by the term 'spiritual' in everyday usage. This raises the question of whether we allow the individual to define the word and interpret experiences for himself/herself as 'spiritual', thus allowing him/her to state whether or not he/she consider himself/herself to be spiritual, and identify occasions which have contributed to his/her spiritual development. As McCreery (2001, p.11) asks, 'Can *any* definition be correct as long as it has meaning for the individual?' Or alternatively we assess these experiences and personality traits against given criteria for spirituality and being spiritually developed and judge them accordingly. The former course runs the risk, according to Thatcher (1991, p.26), of 'rampant epistemological dualism and private individualism', whilst the latter restricts the spiritual to whatever an author's criteria are and thus excludes those who fail to meet the perceived requirements for this. It is the difference between traditional

or organised spirituality and the personal, idiosyncratic kind of spirituality (Gardner, 1999, pp.54-55). As stated above, this research will opt for the latter course and allow respondents to define what they mean by the spiritual for themselves whilst acknowledging the former when attempting to categorise these responses.

Despite all the difficulties referred to above it is desirable to have a shared definition which is understood by all concerned, especially if schools and teachers are charged with the task of delivering this aspect of the educational process. Unless you have some kind of shared definition then, as Williams (1997, p.1) suggests, ‘to talk about the spiritual or spirituality is going to be completely empty.’ For how we define things is how we perceive them. As Rodger (1996, p.50) says, ‘What is needed is a *general* statement which is capable of accommodating all the *specific* forms of spirituality so that those whose spirituality it intends to include may be able to say, “Yes, that does fit, or at least allow room for, what I refer to when talking of my experience of spirituality”.’

2.4.4 Dictionary definitions and origins

An obvious place to start when looking for definitions is a dictionary and an etymological study of the words in question. As Crompton (1998, p.45) says, ‘study of such vocabulary and definitions can help clarify individual concepts and contribute towards development of generally acceptable language with which to discuss children and spirituality.’ Some of the definitions offered by the *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* (2002) are: (i) pertaining to or affecting the spirit or soul; (ii) pertaining to or concerned with sacred or religious things; (iii) pertaining to or consisting of spirit, immaterial; (iv) pertaining to the intellect...of the mind; and (v) concerned with

spirits or supernatural beings. Etymological study, usually starting with the derivation of the word from the Latin *spiritus* (Lewis & Short, 1966), is interesting, but original meanings seldom correspond to current understanding and usage. The Latin *spiritus* meaning ‘breath’ also has a secondary meaning of ‘inspiration’ (Mursell, 2001) and to ‘enliven’ (Hoad, 1989). The Greek *pneuma* meaning ‘air or ‘wind’ also was a metaphor for a life-force. Carson (1996, p.556) identifies the emergence of the term ‘spirituality’ in French Catholic thought, though an earlier focus on what constituted the Christian spiritual life led to this ‘Christian coinage of the term “spirituality”.’ It referred primarily to a discipline which was to be distinguished from dogma by the way in which it concentrated on the reactions to objects in the religious consciousness (Bouyer, 1963, p.viii). The Christian tradition partly formed by Hebrew and Greek cultures was forced to contend with different world views. The dualistic idea of a soul found in Greek thought, where the soul is seen as a spiritual entity (Plato, 1959), was not mirrored in Judaism. In early Judaism man was regarded as a combination of body and breath-soul (*nephesh*), or later body and *ruach*, which is essentially the same as *nephesh* but pointed to ‘the higher associations of its origins’ (Wheeler Robinson, 1956, p.82). Man then is a psycho-physical unity. The Hebrew word *ruach*, the Latin word *spiritus* and the Greek *pneuma* point to something that is physical but invisible. It is something which both animates and motivates a person. Despite the invisible nature of the spiritual it nevertheless denotes real qualities which ‘shape the life of a person or community ... and make them who they are’ (Mursell, 2001, p.9). The inherent danger of separating the physical from the spiritual is to see spiritual perfection as in some sense world denying, as is exemplified in asceticism and Gnosticism.

The term 'spiritual' is, as we have seen, not exclusive to the Christian tradition and now extends to other faith traditions, atheism and agnosticism (King, 1998). Flew (1997) in his article, 'What is "spirituality"?' divides spirituality into categories by linking the word with commonly used terms such as *spirited*, *spirit*, *spiritist*, *spiritual* and *spiritualist*. *Spirited* he associated with psychological dispositions, *spirit* with an incorporeal substance, *spiritist* and *spiritualist* with those who believe in the existence of incorporeal spirits and the possibility of communication with these, and *spiritual* with the higher human characteristics and affinity to non-material matters (Haldane, 2003). It is the last of these which appears to be most relevant in an educational context.

Carr (1995, p.86) highlights two essential meanings of the term 'spiritual'. The first is where the essential characteristics or identifying features of something are referred to, for example, the spirit of the times or the spirit of Hinduism. The second refers to a quality of motivation (or lack of it), for example a horse possessing spirit or a person lacking spirit. This illustration of the ways in which we currently use the term 'spiritual' is further developed by Smith (1999, p.5) who argues that it is helpful to distinguish (whilst accepting they are still inherently connected) between 'spiritual capacities', 'spiritual experiences', 'spiritual understanding' and 'spiritual responses'. These he refers to as the 'four windows onto spiritual growth'. He rightly emphasises that a purely abstract study of spirituality is lacking the vital aspect of lived experience (p.7).

2.4.5 Wholeness and full humanity

In recent years the University of Surrey, Roehampton has hosted an annual international summer conference entitled 'Education, Spirituality and the Whole Child'. This is also the title of a book edited by Ron Best (1996) who was the originator of these annual conferences. The key word here which links spirituality with education is 'wholeness'. The implication is that a truly educated person is also a spiritual person; for education is much more than academic learning and the acquisition of knowledge and skills. A number of writers take this view and link spiritual development with a move towards wholeness and being fully human. For Isherwood and McEwan (1993) spiritual development involves 'imagining wholeness'; for Priestley (1985, p.115) it is about human potential and what a person might become. Keating (2001) sees it is a vital aspect of the passage from adolescence into adulthood, whilst King (1997, p.495) shows how some see it as an essential ingredient in the quest for full humanity and wholeness. Mills (2005, p.10) found, when creating a Spiritual Development Policy for schools, that there was solid agreement that spiritual development was about pupils' 'whole development' and is 'vital to our whole development as human beings.' For Jung 'spiritual instincts' are an awareness of the inborn dispositions or archetypes which shape us and are important for a balanced life, contributing to the process of individuation (Jaffe, 1989, pp.3;13-14). Newby (1996, pp.93-107) connects spiritual development with the development of self-identity and maturity. The British Humanist Association (1993) sees the spiritual dimension as coming from 'our deepest humanity'. Macquarrie (1972, p.40; 1982, p.26) talks of spiritual development as a means of 'becoming more human' and 'a person in the fullest sense'. For Leech (1992, p.16) spirituality is a 'necessary bedrock of the foundation of our lives' and refers to 'the whole life of a human person and human community in relationship with the divine.' Williams

(1990, p.2) concurs with these interpretations, though he not unnaturally links it, as do some of the others, with the Christian life and what he calls ‘theological anthropology’. This last view presents us with yet another question which is: What do we mean by wholeness? We are in something of a ‘Catch 22’ situation whereby our own (perceived) spiritual state to some extent determines our definition and view of what it is. Gilbert (1998, p. ix) is talking of religious experience when he says, ‘our perception and immediate understanding of all religious experiences is conditioned by our cultural background and coloured by our personal faith’, but we can equally apply this to our perceptions of the spiritual. Here one ambiguity is replaced with another. For those of a religious persuasion wholeness and being fully human invariably means a relationship with God and for Christians this is a connection with the work of the Holy Spirit (Berryman, 1985; Toon, 1990; Sheldrake, 1991; Williams, 1990, 1997; Groome, 1998; Thatcher, 1999; 1999: McNamara, 2001; O’Dwyer, 2001). As the Christian mystic Thomas Merton (1975, p.15) puts it, ‘it is the life of the whole person. For the spiritual man (*pneumatikos*) is one whose whole life, in all its aspects and all its activities, has been spiritualized by the action of the Holy Spirit, whether by the sacraments or by personal and interior inspirations.’

We have already seen in the section on *Spirituality and Religion* (2.3) that, whilst spirituality is practically synonymous with religious belief in the minds of some, it is certainly not the case, nor should it be, with all. Spirituality can be understood within both a religious and secular context (Priestley, 1985; Crawford & Rossiter, 1996; Van Ness, 1996; Erricker & Erricker, 2001; Newby, 1996; Hay *et al.*, 1996; Hay & Nye, 1998; Birkedal, 2005). The concepts of ‘wholeness’, being fully educated, and developing one’s full potential, if they are to include the spiritual aspect

of a person, need to allow for the full spectrum of personal beliefs. The likes of Hardy (1979), Hay (1987) and others, along with guidance from 'official' bodies, argue that the spiritual is intrinsic to a person and therefore is an aspect whose development can be assisted through the educational processes. It may be argued that our current education system, apart from 'faith' schools, is liberal and secular and essentially focuses on measurable targets based on skills and knowledge. If schools and colleges do this at the expense of developing the spiritual side of a person they are, as Tacey (2002, p.172) suggests, 'not fulfilling the promise that is inherent in the word "education" itself.' For as he points out the Latin *educare* mean 'to lead out' and this applies to the spiritual 'within' (p.172). (*sic. educare* actually is 'to bring up, educate, rear' and *educere* is 'to lead out', but the point Tacey is making remains the same.) As Webster (1996, pp. 250-251) argues the principal role of the school curriculum is to enable 'youngsters' to become 'truly human' and the spiritual is central to achieving this aim.

2.4.6 The distinctive nature of the spiritual

The connection with and the distinction between spirituality and religion and education is addressed to some extent by Meehan (2002). He argues that much of the confusion and ambiguity is the failure to distinguish between 'spiritual development' and 'developing spiritually' (pp.291-307). The former is educational in intent and as such relevant for all, whilst the latter is essentially catechetical and confessional and thus inappropriate for some children. To some extent Meehan is creating a false dichotomy as most would say that education in state schools should not be indoctrination but rather the fostering of a critically reflective person. The subtle

nuances of the language he identifies are not apparent to most people, something he reluctantly acknowledges (p.291).

What then is the essence of ‘wholeness’, being fully human and being an intrinsically spiritual being all of which are capable of being developed through the educational process? We have seen that, whilst these may be connected to both religion and morality, they are not necessarily dependent upon them, even though they may be an important ingredient in the mix. Two things which are frequently identified as quintessential to the spiritual and spiritual development are the human capability of transcendence and the quality of relationships. Both of these profoundly colour the way in which we see life, imbue it with a sense of meaning and assign value. In other words it leads to a way of knowing and experiencing which influences the way we perceive and interpret reality. As Jung said in his letters, ‘Life that just happens in and for itself is not real life; it is real only when it is *known*’ (Jaffe, 1989, p.15). Or as Socrates said ‘let no day pass without discussing goodness and all the other subjects about which you hear me talking and examining both myself and others is really the very best thing a man can do, and that life without this sort of examination is not worth living’ (Plato, 1959, pp.71-72). Spiritual development is thus transformative. It enables the person to identify what is truly important in life. According to Zohar and Marshall (2000, p.15) this self-awareness is a test for genuine SQ (spiritual intelligence). They go on to say that this ‘way of knowing’ is something that ‘utterly transforms our understanding and our lives’ (p.66). For Myers and Myers (1999, pp.28-32) it is a quality of being fully human which allows us to transcend the known and contemplate the unknown. How and why does it do this?

2.4.7 Transcendence

One of the reasons is that the spiritual both causes and enables us to transcend the ordinary or perhaps see something special in the ordinary, what Webster (1996, p.249) refers to as a ‘freshness of perception’ and Lealman (1982, p.59) as ‘the strange within the familiar’. For McCreery (1996, p.197) the spiritual is ‘an awareness that there is something other, something greater than the course of everyday events.’ Heimbrock (2004, pp.119-131) links it with what is sacred to children and this tends to be in the personal sphere of their lives whereby they perceive the extraordinary within ordinary life. Zohar and Marshall (2000, pp.68-69) describe the transcendent as ‘that which takes us beyond – beyond the present moment, our present joy or suffering, our present selves. It takes us beyond the limits of our knowledge and experience and puts these things in a wider context. The transcendent gives us a taste of the extraordinary, the infinite, within ourselves or within the world around us’. For Buckley (1987, p.360) it is when the experience of wonder reaches a deep and profound level. As such, ‘transcendence is perhaps the most essential quality of the spiritual’ (Zohar & Marshall, 2000, p.68). Du Boulay (1999, pp.16-17) encapsulates such feelings in her description of the consequences of the experience of Bede Griffiths (1954, p.11) when, as a schoolboy, he walked through the fields on a summer’s day:

The normal pattern of his thinking was disrupted and now he knew that there was another dimension to existence. He had experienced one of those moments in which people come face to face with reality: ‘We see our life for a moment in its true perspective in relation to eternity. We are freed from the flux of time and see something of the eternal order which underlies it. We are no longer isolated individuals in conflict with our surroundings; we are part of whole, elements in a universal harmony’.

These transformative experiences, which come to many people at some time, may be ascribed to different sources: divine (Bowker, 1995; Hick, 1999), natural

(Maslow, 1964; Hamer, 2004) or induced (Huxley, 1971; Wells, 1973, pp.189-212). They may vary in intensity from the mystical experience to the merely 'feel good'. This transcendental dimension of spirituality is not necessarily exclusive to any belief system, though some tend to associate it with a religious perspective on life (Elton-Chalcraft, 2001, pp.10-12).

Hick (1999, p.2) regards this capacity for the spiritual as a fifth dimension of nature which enables us to respond to the fifth dimension of the universe. As he puts it: 'The fifth dimension of our nature, the transcendent within us, answers to the fifth dimension of the universe, the transcendent without' (p.8). He argues that it is a human characteristic to experience the natural in terms of the supra-natural (p.3) for humans are religious animals with a propensity to recognise and respond to the 'holy' (Otto, 1931) and the 'sacred' (Eliade, 1978, p.xii). There appears to be a human quest for transcendence (Ehrenwald, 1991, pp.373-403). Hardy (1979, pp.131-133) refers to this as 'feelings for a transcendental reality'. As the philosopher William James said, 'what is best in ourselves appears then also outside of ourselves, and we and the universe are of the same spiritual species' (James, W, *A Pluralistic Universe*, cited Rowe, 1996, p.85).

Watson (2000, p.93) found a group of her interviewees talked of 'an awareness of a felt but indescribable "Transcendent"'. Bainbridge (2000) included the transcendent as one of his five categories of spirituality. Despite this encounter with that 'which is ultimate and transcendent' often being 'fleeting and fragile' (Wright, 2000, p.11), 'elusive' (Radford, 1999, p.166) and 'a mystery beyond definition', (Wright, 1999, p. 11) it is important that education sensitises children to

this important aspect of life (Holley, 1978, p.65). Wright (1999, p.11) argues that for many, 'the recovery of this primal sense of mystery, the re-enchantment of a disenchanted universe, is seen as the prime task of spiritual education'. The guidance papers from educational bodies confirm the importance and significance of this dimension (DES/HMI, 1977b; NCC, 1993; SCAA, 1995; ACCAC, 2000). Hay and Nye (1998, p.66) see 'mystery-sensing' as one of the three categories of spiritual sensitivity (the other two being 'awareness-sensing' and 'value-sensing' which also incorporate aspects of transcendence) (p.59). This 'mystery-sensing' is central to the notion of transcendence and incorporates wonder, awe and imagination (pp.66-70). They (p.67) cite the well known dictum of Immanuel Kant as one the classic examples of this feeling: 'Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing admiration and awe, the oftener and more steadily they are reflected on: the starry heavens above me and the moral law within me' (Kant, 1949, p.258).

Awe and wonder are two terms frequently encountered in school policies for spiritual development. McCreery (2001, p.10) found that 'awe and wonder' was by far the most common response from teachers when asked to describe what they understood by 'spiritual'. Dearing stated that spiritual development 'includes a sense of wonder; a sense of awe, beauty, respect for one's fellow human beings, and appreciation of courage' (Gay, 2000, p.63). The clear benefit inherent in these terms is that they retain a link with transcendence whilst allowing for an independence from explicitly religious connotations.

Carr (1995, p.85) is somewhat scathing of this loose identification of the spiritual with 'various feelings of awe and wonder in relation to everything under the sun'. The link between feelings of awe and wonder and a sense of mystery may well

exist but are at best tenuous. As Carr (2003, p.216) says, 'I may well find mysterious (or inexplicable) what I do not regard as awe-inspiring, or experience wonder at what seems quite unmysterious'. Whilst Carr is no doubt accurate in his dissection of the terms, it does not entirely undermine the connection between the spiritual and feelings and reactions frequently referred to as eliciting awe and wonder in a person, especially if they are identified as spiritual by those experiencing them. As such, feelings of transcendence, which may incorporate or be the result of feelings of awe, wonder and mystery, can be transformative or at least highly significant for the recipient of these feelings. Thus, they may be key elements in what constitutes the spiritual for many people. If so, the question now is: how they can be incorporated and play a part in the opportunities offered for spiritual development in a school? We shall address this question later under the section *Spirituality and Education* (2.8).

There are, of course, other feelings, such as goodness, beauty and truth, which are capable of transporting people out of themselves – a form of transcendence. These are encountered in areas such as art, music, literature, nature, science and relationships. When talking of transcendence we need be careful to distinguish between 'vivid spontaneous spiritual experiences which people tend to remember for the rest of their lives, and the low key spiritual awareness someone aspires to as a permanent personal life stance' (Hay & Nye, 1998, p.89). The exceptional may well be 'earth shattering' but it is the mundane and everyday which constitutes life for the most of us. The nature of the spiritual is that it can infuse any and all areas of life and there is 'no area of human experience which is not open to spiritual awareness' (Hay & Nye, 1998, p.58). Have we returned to the ubiquitous catch-all? To some extent yes but with qualifications: it is a question of the perception (or rather the degree of

perception) of the individual but measured against specified criteria which must be open to reasoned discussion and debate. As Nye (1998, p.10) discovered when talking to children, 'their comments revealed something about their particular way of feeling in touch, a sense of reality that was bigger and deeper than what was obvious, and which could inspire an unexpected shift in their perception of things'. Watson (1993, p.78) identifies signals of transcendence which are both ordinary and profound. These are: a sense of wonder at beauty; artistic creativity; the experience of personal rapport with others; altruism; and the fact of love. The last three include relationships.

2.4.8 Relationships

Few would question the importance of relationships within our lives. Humans are by nature gregarious creatures, and it is our interaction with others and our environment which goes a long way towards forming the persons we are. As Crompton (1998, p.42) points out, 'relatedness' is one of the key words in naming the spiritual life. We also interact with ourselves, but to locate the spiritual principally in inner self reflection as a means to a deeper self understanding and self improvement is to denude the spiritual of a crucial aspect of what it is. This Wright (1999, p.34) refers to as a kind of 'spiritual autism'. At the same time we need to beware of elevating what many would regard as ordinary interaction to the status of the spiritual where even the sharing of sweets becomes the spirituality of fellowship (Hay & Nye, 1998, p.122). Doubtless, ordinary events can be interpreted in a variety of ways; it is a matter of 'seeing as', but once more much rests on the individual's interpretation of these interactions. Also communal spirituality is not always necessarily a positive thing as some the more extreme groups and movements illustrate.

Williams (1997) basing his understanding of 'educating the spirit' on scripture says it involves 'particular kinds of relationships to others.' It is the way in which we relate to others, the environment and to God. It is a quality of the self which finds expression in communion and/or community (p.2). To some extent this echoes the findings of the 1996 Forum for Values in Education and the Community (see chapter 1) which highlighted the four areas of the self, relationships, society and the environment, as crucial to the promotion of shared values by schools. The difference is that the religious source of these values was optional in the latter documentation.

Fisher (1999, p.31) identified four sets of relationships which contribute towards a person's spiritual health. These are: a relationship with themselves; others, the environment; and with a higher order. These four domains he referred to as: personal; communal; environmental; and global.

Nye (1998, p.11) agrees with Williams in arguing that it is the way in which we see ourselves in relation to others, self, God and the environment which is key to the essence of understanding spirituality and in particular children's spirituality. She calls this quality 'relational consciousness' (1998, p.11; Hay & Nye, 1998, pp.112-158). This may or may not be religious. It is a 'distinctively reflective consciousness' sometimes referred to as 'meta-cognition' (Hay & Nye, 1998, p.113). The 'relational' extends to being in relationship with almost anything which 'adds value' to the 'ordinary everyday perspective' (p.114). One of the problems with Nye's analysis of the spiritual is that much of what she identifies as spiritual just serves to illustrate children's imagination and varieties of consciousness. Not everyone would concur

with her reading of the comments made by children as being spiritual statements. Here Nye as researcher is imposing her own definition of what constitutes the spiritual. Whilst there is nothing inherently wrong in this approach it fails to allow the recipients of the experiences commented upon to interpret the experiences they refer to as spiritual or not for themselves. Part of the difficulty is that those under investigation are children and, as such, are often unable to say whether this is what they mean by a spiritual experience or just an experience which may have moved them or is particularly memorable. Her table for the dimensions of relational consciousness to be used as a framework for children's spirituality are so all-embracing as to virtually include every type of experience (Hay & Nye, 1998, p.120). She does accede that 'many, if not all, of the attributes within these lists are normal processes forming the conventional content of child psychology (e.g. playing, imagination, games, stories, autobiography)' (p.119). The danger here is of 'creeping spirituality' identified earlier.

To some extent there is a similarity with the research of the Errickers with their *Children and Worldviews Project* (this will be covered in greater detail under the subheading *Spirituality and Education*) which involves listening to children with 'an open ear' and 'trying to find structures and systems in the way they construct their metaphorical frameworks' in order to better understand spiritual matters (along with religious matters and learning in general) (Erricker & Erricker, 1996, p.194). This post-modernist approach identifies what is important to children and uses this as a means of mapping their spiritual lives (Erricker *et al.*, 1997). The advantage of this approach is that it allows the children to speak for themselves, but some might argue at the expense of clearly defined criteria for what is truly spiritual.

Bradford (1995, p.35) also stresses the importance of positive relationships with ourselves, our family, with God and our faith community (if we belong to one), and with others and the wider world. Thus for him (p.1) spirituality is ‘a tripartite concept, the three parts of which – human, devotional and practical – fit closely together and complement the whole’. Spirituality grows in and through relationships with others and interpersonal engagement in life (p.40). Spirituality is part of a fundamental need to be loved, secure, creative, and participate in the life of the community (pp.14-15). For him religion provides a valuable framework for this growth, but, as we have stressed, this presents a problem for those who not only reject the tenets of religion but also are antagonistic towards it. Nevertheless, feelings of transcendence and relationships can be equally applicable, even if interpreted differently, to those falling into one or more of the four broad clusters of spirituality identified by Wright (1999, p.33). These are:

- the spirituality of individual religious traditions;
- the spirituality of a universal pluralistic religiosity;
- the spirituality of secular atheism; and
- the spirituality of post-modern agnosticism.

These four are condensed by Ashley (2000) into two: humanistic/secular and the divine/supernatural.

Wright (1999, p.33) follows this clustering of spirituality with a definition which underscores the importance of relationships by linking them to another important aspect of the spiritual – the asking of questions and the search for meaning with the vital word ‘ultimate’ inserted. ‘Spirituality is the developing relationship of

the individual, within the community and tradition, to that which is – or perceived to be – of ultimate concern, ultimate value and ultimate truth’. He later shortens this to our ‘*concern for the ultimate meaning and purpose of life*’ (Wright, 2000, p.7).

2.4.9 Ultimate questions and the search for meaning

Ultimate questions which are questions of universal application and significance but have no easy or mutually agreed answers are seen as indicators of the spiritual and a means of providing opportunities for spiritual development. These questions bring us ‘face to face with ultimate questions of life and death, beauty and ugliness, good and evil, security and anxiety, meaning and despair’ (Wright, 1999, p.12). This is considered to be a form of intelligence with which we address and solve problems of meaning and value (Zohar & Marshall, 2000, pp.2-3). Indeed, Zohar and Marshall claim that it is this capacity to search for meaning and value which distinguishes us from animals (p.4). As far as we know, it is a unique human characteristic. For Astley (2003, pp.151-152) a spiritually mature person is one who has an assurance of worth and meaning. This is not the same as saying that there *is* an ultimate meaning and value to life but rather that the meaning and value we imbue it with has a spiritual quality. As Bruno Bettelheim said, ‘We are entirely the by-products of evolutionary accident. There is no purpose in our existence, but we must proceed as if there were’ (cited, Kee, 1987, p.48). Not all share this pessimistic, but maybe realistic, view of life. We might do better to talk of meanings rather than meaning (see Copley, 2000, pp.135-136). This means that it is the search rather than the solution which is the essence of the spiritual. The spiritual is now more a process than a product. Accordingly, Williams (1997, p.3)

suggests the spiritual in education is more than merely trying to get across a set of values and is as much, if not more, to do with the process of education as content. This merely moves the problem from one of defining the product to defining the process. Now it becomes a matter, as Carr (1996, p.164) says, of clarifying the nature of these processes and how they might be promoted.

Of all the so-called ultimate questions which focus the mind on purpose, value and meaning, is that which is concerned with death. 'Death brings to life a larger context of meaning and value' (Zohar & Marshall, 2000, p.196). Sogyal Rinpoche's popular book *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying* (1992) stresses the importance of contemplating death as a means of spiritual development. In a contribution to a later work he underscores how it is a means to self-understanding and spiritual development when he says, 'because if we can only learn how to face death, then we'll have learned the most important lesson of life: how to face *ourselves* and so come to terms with ourselves, in the deepest possible sense, as human beings' (Longaker, 1998, p.xi). Eventually we are all forced to realise that this future event will one day become part of our present, bringing with it the reality of finitude. We realise that we are subject to a biological process and natural laws, yet we feel not only subject to them but in some sense way above them with a sense of purpose and meaning that gives an 'unnecessary' depth to life. This conflict of reason and feeling is well expressed in some of the last words written by a young woman who died of cancer: 'No one is special, are they, when all is said and done? And of course each of us is very special, very singular, carrying weight. I matter. I would like to open the window tonight and yell that outside. *I matter*, or go down next to the plants and whisper it' (Lynch, 1983, p.36). Our inner desire for fulfilment or self-realisation convinces us of the worth of the individual despite his or her insignificance in the totality of things. Unamuno (1954, p.11) in his

reply to the question, ‘And who are you?’ cites Obermann, ‘For the universe nothing – for myself everything’.

Our senses tell us about the world, others and ourselves but we make value-judgments with this sensory information. Death now becomes more than just a biological process, for it puts an end to something unique – myself and others who will not be replaced. According to Sutherland (1995, p.22) this awareness of our finitude is the ‘most critical shared inheritance of human beings’. As such ‘spiritual development is the recognition of the significance of human finitude’ (p.22). ‘Learning to die’ for Grosch (1999, p.191) is one of the four spiritual exercises which would revitalise spirituality.

Whilst this may appear a maudlin and depressing topic to focus upon in life and especially in schools, it need not be the case. The Isle of Wight agreed syllabus for RE (1997) incorporated the theme of death in both primary and secondary schools, and death education is to be found in such centres as the Association for Death Education and Counselling and the National Center for Death Education, across the United States. Sutherland (1995, p.23) argues that ‘a proper spiritual development will encourage a recognition, then an understanding, then a response to human finitude’. Death’s finality is necessary for us to take life seriously with its many moral decisions. It gives us a sense of urgency, (for events are unrepeatable) and prevents us from reverting to the Gnostic heresies with the abandonment of this world focussing entirely on the next. Death takes great and small and imparts humility. Life becomes a gift. So paradoxically the very event that robs life of meaning also imparts it. We shall see later (2.5.2. *Causes and Triggers of Spiritual Experience*) that one of the triggers for what might be classed

a spiritual experience or reflection, can be a moment of crisis or sadness such as the serious illness or death of a close relative. Spirituality is not necessarily synonymous with happiness and can be at its deepest during moments of sadness and grief. Some of the great literary and artistic pieces bear testimony to this. These difficult and ‘dangerous’ topics are distinct possibilities for schools to provide opportunities for spiritual development (Raban, 1987, pp.24-29).

A contemplation of topics such as this links with Carr’s (1996, p.166) definition of the spiritual and what constitutes a ‘spiritual property’. This, however, is more than just the ability to grasp, identify and even ‘solve’ a range of spiritual problems and questions (p.166). For in order to do this it involves ‘substantial acquaintance with particular evaluative perspectives enshrined in specific traditions’ (p.168). Thus, the spiritual, in terms of education, is not just process but also content (Carr, 2003, p.216). It is not just feelings but also intellect. Personal experience is measured and understood against the grand narratives of the various traditions. Consequently ‘religious or spiritual truths face a test of experience, not singly but as a body – in terms of their overall coherence within one or the other grand narratives’ (p.173). For Carr (1999, p.454; 2003, p.221) there ‘is a distinctive realm of spiritual truths’ such as ‘no man shall serve two masters’, ‘man shall not live by bread alone’, and ‘what profit a man if he gain the whole world but forfeit his soul’. As a result spiritual education is ‘primarily concerned with the pursuit of spiritual knowledge, the grasp of spiritual truths and the cultivation of spiritual dispositions’ (Carr, 1995, p.97). This involves not only enquiry and reflection but also initiation into religious and spiritual practices (Carr, 1996, pp.173-174). This is a move towards a spirituality closely linked to religious traditions, or at least a good understanding of them, with the resulting

tendency to call into question the cross-curricular nature of spirituality. For there can be no extensive notion of 'spiritual education' within the context of secularised general education (Carr, 1995, pp.93-97; 1996, p.176; 1999, p.461). We will explore this further under the heading, *Spirituality and Education*, but suffice to say here that to deny that there is a secular spiritual tradition or secular spirituality is a false notion. Meehan (2002, pp.303-304) points this out in his critique of the work of Carr, where he confirms what we argued above (2.3 *Spirituality and Religion*) that not all religious people are spiritual and not all spiritual people are religious. In fairness to Carr he does consider a 'third way' which steers a course between, 'the Scylla of controversial allegiance to specific religiously grounded traditions and the Charybdis of vague, evasive and perhaps ultimately vacuous talk of awe and wonder' (Carr, 2003, p.217). Spiritual truths, such as those mentioned above, have near equivalents in other religions (p.222) and even possibly secular humanism. So reflections on finitude and questions on suffering, immortality and the like allow for spiritual development. Such reflections however must have some understanding of what the major faith traditions have to say on these matters.

This is not just concerns with 'truth-focused' (Carr, 2003, p.222) reflections but as Carr is keen to point out, the spiritual life is also concerned to promote 'spiritual virtues' which are more than just moral virtues. Examples of these spiritual virtues are the '*theological* virtues (of faith, hope and charity)' and might include forgiveness and chastity (p.222). Thus, spiritual education is the reflection on these truths and the cultivation of spiritual virtues which can be understood naturalistically. This naturalistic understanding, however, is closer to traditionalism than postmodernism (p.224).

Whilst we can agree with Carr that the spiritual and spiritual development involves both an understanding of traditional spiritual perspectives on universal issues or questions and the cultivation of spiritual virtues, we can question the educational value of these virtues. Carr (1995, p.92) argues that these virtues are spiritual because they are 'oriented towards the extra-mundane dimension of human aspiration to what lies beyond the purely temporal'. Hope, for example, counters the spiritual failings of meaningless and futility (p.92). Charity is spiritual because it may sometimes override justice. Faith, it appears, is more clearly linked to a religious position (pp.92-93).

Let us take one example of these spiritual virtues, the spiritual virtue of hope, and look at it in relation to the question of finitude. No doubt this positive disposition may well have benefits for the psychological well-being of the person (see Francis, 2005, pp.15-38) but when applied to topics such as death it may be, but is not necessarily, the most accurate of responses. For example, if death leads to total extinction, it is omnipotent and the final reality. It, in a sense, becomes God, but a god that is totally indifferent. It cares for neither good nor evil. All the pain and anguish have no redemption. Horror and suffering are just that and no more with oblivion being the only escape. Sadly, for most life is a tragedy, but even the lucky few who find fulfilment discover the impartiality of death. Hope there may be for mankind, but, as far as the individual is concerned, this is an amorphous hope, for it is something the person may strive for but not share in. As daunting as this may be, it is one, many say, that must be faced with as much strength and courage (a *cardinal* rather than a *spiritual* virtue according to Carr 2003, p.222), as we can muster. The argument of some would be that puerile fantasies and self-indulgent dreams do not and cannot change reality. Like all normal people atheists are sensible to suffering, grieving over tragedy and

sharing the concern and compassion for the well-being of their fellow man, but for the sake of intellectual self-respect and true human dignity they cannot accept that the injustices of this life will somehow be put right by God after death. As Camus once said, 'I shall not ... try to pass myself off as a Christian ... I share with you the same revulsion from evil. But I do not share your hope' (cited by Barker, 1986, p.370). Does this mean that Camus was lacking in an important spiritual virtue?

Nevertheless, Carr is right to identify spiritual development as combining both academic and experiential components. Some understanding of the spiritual life of others is necessary for 'spiritual literacy' (Brussant, 1998, p.11). Crompton (1998, p.44) succinctly summarises spirituality as the 'awareness of feelings and beliefs which in turn stimulate self-awareness and answers to "why" questions about life.' In order to fully appreciate and deal with these 'why' questions some kind of understanding of the answers provided by the faith (and other) traditions is desirable, despite Nietzsche's assertion that 'too much information causes indigestion of the spirit' (Gane & Chan, 2000, p.75). The spiritual thus becomes an exploration of what is important and of value in life; an appreciation of experiences that may result in the person transcending the moment and are transformative and imbued with deep significance by the recipient; an understanding and consideration of 'ultimate' questions which are universal; and knowledge of the spiritual traditions found in faith communities. These are part of the relationships we have with ourselves, others (and animals), the environment and the wider community, and for the religious – God. These do not pretend to be definitive definitions of the spiritual and spiritual development but rather, as Webster (1990, p.375) says, 'starting points from which to quest, rather than a map of the territory'. As

McCreedy (1994, p.98) says, 'one final definition will be impossible'. Nevertheless, she (p.98) is still able to elucidate the essential elements of the spiritual:

It appears that the spiritual is to do with that aspect of human nature which reaches beyond; beyond the known and the ordinary, beyond the explainable to the mysterious to find answers. At the same time it strives to improve and change both itself and the world around it. ... A word which seems to bring together many of the descriptions is "vital". The spiritual is the vital part of humanity, the essence and also the power.

To a certain extent we have touched upon the causes or triggers of these experiences but we now need explore this in greater detail and also to discover how widespread these experiences are. We do this in order to raise the question of whether schools in providing opportunities for spiritual development should aim to give children 'spiritual experiences', whatever these are, and if it is reasonable to expect the majority will have an experience which they deem to be spiritual. Part of this research will examine the percentage number of respondents who claim to have had what they identify as a spiritual experience and then attempt to categorise these experiences. The research will also consider how teachers and prospective teachers plan or intend to plan for opportunities for the spiritual development of those in their charge.

2.5 The extent, types and the causes of spiritual experiences

At the start of this section on the definition of spirituality we saw that Hardy thought it almost impossible to define. Despite this he wrote two of the seminal works on religious and/or spiritual experience – *The Divine Flame* (1966) and *The Spiritual Nature of Man* (1979) – and went on to found and become director of the Religious Experience Research Unit at Manchester College, Oxford. His research, rather than define religious/spiritual experience, attempted to understand what it is by listening to people and their accounts of what happened to them. This gave him an evidence base

from which to formulate tentative conclusions on the nature and extent of religious/spiritual experience.

2.5.1 The extent of spiritual experiences

Hardy first investigated the extent of religious experience in 1925 by appealing through the press for people to send him accounts of their experiences in this area (1979, p.3). The response was not particularly good with only about two hundred replies and most of these from elderly women. This request went out again 1970 after encouraging responses to newspaper interviews with Hardy in 1969. His call for information went as follows:

Professor Hardy ... invites all who have been conscious of, and perhaps influenced by, some power, whether they call it the power of God or not, to write a simple and brief account of these feelings and effects. They should include particulars of age, sex, nationality, religious upbringing and other factors thought to be relevant (Hardy, 1979, p.18).

The responses tended to be predominantly the more ecstatic and dramatic types of experience and Hardy wondered if it would have been better to call his unit 'the study for spiritual awareness' rather than using the term 'religious experience.' Hardy widened and clarified the appeal asking for 'accounts of the seemingly more ordinary but deeply felt experiences.' As he said (1979, p.19), he was just as interested in 'that continuing sense of spiritual awareness which many people feel makes a difference to their lives'. This time the response was significantly better with Hardy eventually having an evidence base of several thousands and using the first 3000 records to create categories and subdivisions based on the accounts of these experiences (pp.142-146). Given the diverse nature of these experiences Hardy suggested ninety-two categories

but still arrived at the conclusion that ‘spiritual awareness appears to be universal to human kind’ (p.2). For him it was an inbuilt biological condition of being human. This is a view shared by others (Hay, 1987: Hay & Nye, 1998, p.57; Webster, 1990, p.357).

The question asked by Hardy has become something of a standard for determining the extent of spiritual experience. David Hay who came to collaborate with Hardy in his research used it as the principal question in his questionnaire given to one hundred of his students (Hardy, 1979, p.124; Hay 1979). This question – *‘Do you feel that you have ever been aware of or influenced by a presence or a power, whether you call it God or not, which is different from your everyday self?’* – has been repeated by others researching in this field (Jackson, 1997, p.232; Watson, 2001, p.5). Hay found that 65 per cent responded in the affirmative with 6 per cent not sure. These experiences then appear to be far more common than is often realised. It is, however, interesting to note that a differently worded question - *‘Have you ever had what you regard as an encounter with an angel or a devil, or some other kind of supernatural experience?’* - posed by Gallup (1982) in 1981 to leading scientists found that 85 per cent said ‘no’ and only 5 per cent said ‘yes’ (p.209).

Research conducted by the Religious Experience Research Unit, set up in Oxford in 1969, has shown that between a third and half of the people questioned admit to having been aware of or influenced by this presence or power (Gilbert, 1998, pp.6-7). The more educated scored higher than those less well educated. British polls (1978 and 1979) also found that such experiences were more likely to occur to those who were older, better educated, and regularly attended church (Guiley, 1993, p.384). A 1986 Gallup Omnibus Survey in Britain revealed about half of those surveyed felt they had

had such an experience (Hay & Nye, 1998, p.16). According to Zohar and Marshall (2000, p.99) in 'Western cultures, 30-40 per cent of the population are recorded as having had on at least one occasion feelings such as great euphoria and well-being accompanying deep insights that bring new perspectives to life, the sense that everything around them is alive and aware, the sense of a guiding or comforting presence, or the feeling of being at one with the whole of existence.' This rises to between 60 and 70 per cent when more sensitive techniques (such as personal interviewing) are used (Hay, 1987; Jackson, 1997, p.227; Zohar & Marshall, 2000, p.99). This dramatic increase does cause one to question the nature of the interviewing and the possibility of the interviewers' leading the interviewee to confirm what they want to hear. Or are one to one interviews better able to tease out what most people are reluctant or unable to put in writing? Hay and Nye (1998, p.16) opt for the latter interpretation arguing that sensitive interviews give 'time to build up rapport and overcome the shyness of those being interviewed'. Both points need to be taken note of when conducting this research especially as a more recent survey of over 800 young people in schools in Cardiff found that only 13 per cent claimed to ever have had a religious experience and even fewer (9 per cent) a spiritual experience (Thompson, 2007). Despite these statistics Thompson found that 29 per cent of young people believed that a 'spiritual being' has sometimes guided them in their lives causing him to conclude that 'young people are more likely to believe in angels and spirits than they believe in Jesus' (p.13) and how 'significant minorities of young people are influenced by New Age ideas and teachings' (p.14).

These experiences are just as common across the Atlantic where a survey in 1987 by the National Opinion Research Center in Chicago found that 43 per cent of

adult Americans said they had had some type of mystical experience (Guiley, 1993, p.384).

A more recent survey taken at the turn of the century found 38 per cent claimed an awareness of God and 29 per cent an awareness of a sacred presence in nature (BBC, 2000). A quarter had a spiritual experience of some form of contact with a dead person (BBC, 2000). These research databases add further confirmation that the experience of the spiritual is more widespread than at first might be imagined, given our so-called liberal, rational, secular culture (see Francis & Greer, 1993, pp.38-43). Perhaps this is not so surprising when the guidance for schools tells us the spiritual is an integral and universal aspect of a person in society.

It was Abraham Maslow who to a certain extent confirmed the universality and ‘normality’ of these experiences whilst at the same time freeing them from the shackles of institutional religion and the supernatural (Gollnick, 2002, pp.86-87). The religiously neutral phrase he used to describe these quasi-mystical experiences of almost intense joy and affirmation was ‘peak experience’ (Maslow, 1964). These experiences are not only normal but therapeutic (Maslow, 1964; Wilson & Grant, 1982; Guiley, 1993). He also found that they were more common in the more intelligent, or the ‘alphas’ and ‘self-actualizers’. A self-awareness of these experiences resulted in more experiences. As Wilson (Wilson & Grant, 1982, p.177) says of the peak experience, it ‘is a function of normal health and sense of purpose. People might be compared to cars whose batteries run down if they are left unused but charge up the moment they experience a sense of enthusiasm and purpose’. There are two types of peak experiences: relative and absolute, the latter being of a more mystical nature where the subject and object

become one (Guiley, 1993, p.438). Maslow later extended his account to include 'plateau experiences' which constitute a kind of continuing peak experience that is 'more voluntary, noetic, and cognitive' (Guiley, 1993, p.439). Hamer (2004) attempts to show how there may well be a greater genetic predisposition in some towards spirituality whose essential feature is self-transcendence.

Jung also believed that religious and spiritual experiences are common and normal; for the 'soul' is religious by nature and such experiences are rooted in the collective unconscious and in collective archetypes. As the close associate of Jung, Aniela Jaffe (1989, p.23) says, 'In psychological terms, mystical experiences are exceptional only with regard to their intensity or degree, not in their essence, and that man in his innermost nature was created *homo mysticus*.'

It was Hardy's successor, Edward Robinson (1977) who noticed that many of the accounts the Oxford Research Unit received were reminiscences of childhood experiences. Children were thus capable of 'spiritual' experiences which left a mark on the rest of their lives. He also argued that there was the possibility that these experiences would be suppressed as the child moved into adulthood. This, as Wright (2000, p.40) points out, challenged the then accepted model of cognitive development which imposed a restrictive intellectual framework on children. The findings of Robinson were both confirmed and extended by Coles (1992) in his book *The Spiritual Life of Children*. This cross cultural investigation appears to confirm the universal aspect of spiritual awareness and experience.

Research has also shown that between 60 and 70 per cent of the adult population have what are termed schizotypal features (Claridge, 1997, p.31; Zohar & Marshall, 2000, p.104). These are odd little quirks that some might refer to as irrational superstitious or mildly eccentric behaviour (and often viewed with greater toleration in children than adults) but remain within what is deemed to be normal mental health and may even have a positive link to creativity (Jackson, 1997, p.229; Brod, 1997, pp.274-298). Jackson (p.229) argues that benign spiritual experiences may be phenomenological expressions of high levels of schizotypy. He has conducted research with groups of 'normal' and 'psychotic' subjects. What Jackson discovered was that whilst both groups had experiences which can be considered spiritual there were marked differences between the experiences of the healthy and the mentally ill. It was James (1928) who drew attention to the 'closeness of the phenomenological relationship between spiritual and psychotic experiences' (Jackson, 1997, p.228). Jackson subdivides the spiritual experience into two broad 'dimensional prototypes' (p.231). These are the *mystical* experience which include feelings of profound meaning, insight, well-being and unity; and the *numinous* experience which is characterised by a sense of a guiding presence, extra-sensory perception and feelings of altered states of consciousness. It is the former we have focused upon in our section on definitions, but the latter does embrace responses one might expect to the question put by the likes of Hardy and Hay, namely being influenced by a presence or power. What Jackson discovered was that the clinically mentally ill group reported higher instances of the numinous experiences and that these were often more disturbing, negative and bizarre (p.236). This group made more reference to a divine presence and more frequently lost contact with 'consensual reality' (pp.238; 242). Unlike the 'normal' group the 'diagnosed group' had difficulty integrating the experiences into their everyday lives

(p.242). The clinical sample gave significantly more affirmative responses to Jackson's spiritual experience questionnaire (87.3 per cent compared with 28.1 per cent). The duration of these experiences is generally very brief even though their meaning for the recipient may well be enduring. Only 6.2 per cent of the normal group reported experiences which lasted a few hours compared with 40 per cent of the clinical group (p.234).

All this shows that we are all 'capable of spiritual experiences and the questions and awareness that underline this experience are therefore relevant to all pupils' (Radford, 1999, p.171). What it also shows is that, although there are underlying common threads to these experiences, there is great variety. Schools will clearly focus on providing opportunities for the more benign and 'normal' of these experiences. What the above further illustrates is that one of the triggers of spiritual experiences can be a clinical condition. As Jackson (1997, p.229) says:

The current hypothesis is that benign spiritual experiences may be phenomenological expressions of high levels of schizotypy, in the same way as are more pathological, psychotic experiences. In other words, it is suggested that the same constellation of schizotypal traits predispose to both benign spiritual experience and psychotic breakdown.

2.5.2 Triggers or causes of spiritual experiences

The findings of psychology, neuropsychological and neurobiology give us an insight into spiritual experiences as much as the disciplines of philosophy and theology. Some even refer to these areas of research as *neurotheology* (Keating, 2001, p.1). Neuroscience or brain science has been able to indicate that certain parts of the brain are active during religious and spiritual experiences (it is practically impossible to distinguish between the two in terms of brain activity). Some have used this to imply

that both religion and spirituality are part and product of the evolutionary process and hard-wired into the brain and our genes (Zohar & Marshall, 2000; D'Aquili & Newberg, 2001; Heffern, 2001; Hamer, 2004; Olkowski, 2006). The parts of the brain which are stimulated during these experiences are the temporal lobes. Indeed Persinger was able to induce a religious/spiritual experience by artificially stimulating this part of the brain (Zohar & Marshall, 2000, pp.92-93).

Activity in this area of the brain is also associated with epilepsy (Gardner, 1999, pp.62-63) and therefore it comes as no surprise that those suffering from epileptic seizures often report experiences which may be described as religious/spiritual. It has even been argued that St. Paul and the prophet Mohammed suffered from epilepsy and this partly accounts for their religious experiences. This is not to deny the possibility that the principal trigger or cause of these experiences is God (Merton, 1975; Macquarrie, 1980; Bowker, 1995; Hick, 1999; Radford, 1999) but the verification of this is beyond the scope of this work or indeed anyone else as the experiences can be interpreted from a religious or non-religious perspective and the only verification of a divine source is what Hick (1963, p.101) calls 'eschatological verification'. Anyone, however, viewing Ramachandran's television programme *Phantoms of the Brain* (or reading the book linked to the television series – Ramachandran & Blakeslee, 1998) the reactions and comments of a post-seizure patient will be left in no doubt as to the intensity and sincerity of the experiences of the young man concerned and their similarity to accounts of mystical experiences. Ramachandran has been erroneously attributed (see Zohar & Marshall, 2000, pp.11; 95) with calling this area of the brain the 'God spot', but he has shown that mentally healthy people show increased temporal lobe activity when exposed to spiritual/religious words and topics.

Research by Beauregard cited by Highfield (2006), involving the study of Carmelite nuns asked to relive a mystical experience, rather than actually try to achieve one, concluded that there was no specific spiritual centre in the brain but that there were a dozen different regions of the brain activated during the experience. This as, Highfield (2006, p.12) says, shows that, 'mystical experiences are mediated by several brain regions and systems normally implicated in functions such as self-consciousness, emotion and body representation.' As such, it questions the specific identification of the 'God spot' as being the temporal lobes. The biological mechanics of where the experiences are actually located makes little difference to the inference that we are biologically programmed to have such experiences and feelings. As Jones (2006, p.16) asks, 'Can the sacred ever be explained in terms of the profane, as the scanners seem to believe? Do the two deal in the same currency?' His view is that this attempt to reduce complex effects to simple causes is really science without a theory and not really science at all (p.16). No doubt this is a debate which will continue and the penchant of religion to call upon science to verify and support its claims, and for scientists to enter the debate and lend credibility to these claims is not unknown (Abell & Singer, 1981). We would do well to remember that 'an individual, even an accomplished scientist cannot simply enter a new arena of inquiry and arbitrarily make it scientific' (Hyman, 1981, p.132).

The brain can also be stimulated artificially by drugs (Jackson, 1997, p.228), and again anyone reading accounts of the drug induced visions and experiences of the likes of Huxley (mescaline) and Leary (LSD – lysergic acid diethylamide) have little option other than to agree with Stace (1961) who says of the drug experience: 'It's not a

matter of it being similar to mystical experience; it is mystical experience' (in Zaehner, 1972, p.79; see also Huxley, 1971; Gilbert, 1998, pp.72-76; Murray 2002, pp.398-409). Zaehner who was a Professor of Eastern Religions and Ethics at Oxford, entered this field in order to refute Huxley's claims which he considered struck at the very roots of all religion though his attack on the mystical nature of the experiences are regarded by some as polemical and *ad hominum* attacks on Huxley (Wells, 1973, pp.203-204).

Medical research has also discovered that our bodies produce powerful anaesthetics in certain circumstances. These are referred to as endorphins (or enkephalins) and can be '100 times more powerful than morphine' (Leith, 1985, p.7). There are a number of causes for the body to release these endorphins such as illness, injury and even acupuncture. As Leith (p.8) says 'we humans have certainly learnt how to give ourselves endorphin "highs": jogging is one example'. A similar physical pursuit is rhythmic dancing to the beating of drums or chanting and this can have the same effect (Zohar & Marshall, 2000, p.94).

Clearly mental illness and drug induced experiences are not something schools need unduly concern themselves with, other than possibly studying the causes, effects and implications associated with these areas. (Though children suffering from epilepsy are to be found in mainstream schools and there is even evidence to associate schizotypy with dyslexia [Richardson, 1997; Zohar & Marshall, 2000, p.106]).

Some of the other triggers or causes which have been recognised are more likely to be encountered by schools and acknowledged by the respondents of this research. In her study Laski (1961) identified as triggers: aspects of nature; music; poetry; pictorial

art; architecture (especially churches); creative work; and sexual love (Gilbert 1998, p.87). Hardy (1979, pp.28-29) refers to twenty-one triggers which I have listed below in order of occurrence:

1. Depression, despair
2. Prayer, meditation
3. Natural beauty
4. Participation in religious worship
5. Literature, drama, film
6. Illness
7. Music
8. Crisis in personal relationships
9. The death of others
10. Sacred places
11. Visual art
12. Creative work
13. Relaxation
14. Silence, solitude
15. The prospect of death (*this scored the same as the previous trigger*)
16. Drugs: anaesthetic
17. Physical activity
18. Childbirth
19. Happiness
20. Drugs: psychedelic
21. Sexual relations

Hay (1987) suggests that the most commonly reported context for a contemporary spiritual experience is some form of crisis (Jackson, 1997, p.248). Hardy, as we have seen, created ninety-two categories for the experiences triggered by the occasions listed above. It is not the intention of this research to follow the subtleties of difference recorded by Hardy but rather to attempt to apply the responses received from students and teachers to broad categories of experience which they have deemed to regard as spiritual. This is in line with the research of the likes of Bainbridge (2000) who after studying the responses of 1195 trainee teachers came up with five categories. These were: notions of finding oneself; the spiritual and religion; hints of transcendence; the spiritual as found in relationships; and the spiritual and morality.

Rogers and Hill (2002) also formed five categories for the responses of those on initial primary teacher education courses. Their categories included spirituality and the self (reflection); religion; nature (environment/universe); relationships; and major life events (birth/marriage/death).

Just as the definitions for the spiritual encompass the many areas and experiences of life, so too the triggers for spiritual experiences can come from a multitude of sources, both positive and negative. From the above lists we can see at a glance those which might be applicable to the work of schools and those which might be less suitable, to the positively illegal. Added to this we need to question whether it is the role of schools to plan to give spiritual experiences to pupils or to provide opportunities for spiritual development to take place. Should they enable pupils to refine their awareness of the wonder, mystery and value of life or is this better left to the individual pupil, some of whom may be more predisposed (Hamer, 2004) to these 'spiritual reactions' than others? This is associated with the question whether spiritual experiences are spontaneous or worked for and whether the experiences are sufficient in themselves or part of a process of linear development and growth towards some kind of goal.

2.5.3 Spontaneous or worked for?

If, as is suggested above, a common mechanism underlies spiritual experiences, Jackson (1997, p.240) suggests we are more likely to make progress on understanding the nature of these experiences through an improved understanding of the personal, social and cultural contexts in which these experiences occur. This is a view shared by Gilbert (1998, p.88), even though Zohar and Marshall (2000, p.9) claim that SQ (spiritual intelligence) is not culture-dependent or value-dependent. Just as near death

experiences (NDE) are widespread with common components, the interpretations of the experience are still often culturally conditioned (Hampe, 1979, p.44; Sabom, 1982, p.199; Badham & Badham, 1982, p.85; Kastenbaum, 1984 p.14). The profound and frequently life changing NDE (itself a spiritual experience) is not something that is planned. Laski argued that, whilst what she referred to as withdrawal experiences could be deliberately induced, intensity experiences could not (Gilbert, 1998, p.87). Not all concur with this view, for just as within Buddhism the experience of Enlightenment can either be spontaneous like a lightning bolt ('Southern School') or achieved only after years of disciplined practices ('Northern School') (McGreal, 1995, p.96) so too are spiritual experiences.

In short, given the triggers above and the history and accounts of religious and spiritual experiences (Kurs, 1999), these experiences can occur spontaneously or sought for through some form of inducement, and, of course, there is the grey area in between (Guiley, 1993, p.385). The former typically occur when a person is alone and in a relaxed state of mind whilst the latter can be through applying techniques linked to some sort of regime (usually religious) (Guiley, 1993, p.385). The paths to these experiences are listed by some of the great mystics (Underhill, 1930; Merton, 1975; Daffern, 1993; Duane, 1997; Gilbert, 1998; Mursell, 2001) and involve effort and discipline. The experience itself, however, can and often does have a powerful and lasting emotional influence on the person (Zohar & Marshall, 2000, p.95).

The implications for schools are twofold. First, the school can provide a curriculum and experiences which may or may not precipitate a spontaneous reaction which might be described as a spiritual experience. This is similar to the argument for

the statutory retention of acts of collective worship whereby pupils are led to the ‘threshold of worship’ but may or may not be induced to actually worship with its accompanying experiences. Secondly, schools can design a programme of activities with the explicit intention of stirring up specific experiences and emotions which may be regarded as spiritual. These might include meditative practices (Erricker & Erricker, 2001b) or ‘creative visualisations’ and ‘guided fantasies’ (Hammond *et al.*, 1990; Stone, 1992). Both approaches imply that there is a benefit and value to pupils in exploring this aspect of their nature. Again, this belief that the spiritual development of pupils is both educational and intrinsically a good thing is confirmed by the guidance to schools. We now need to explore whether or not this is the case and what the benefits are of enhancing the spiritual side of life.

2.6 The value and benefits of spiritual experience and developing the spiritual

People everywhere spend as much time as they can afford on activities that, in the struggle to survive and reproduce, seem pointless. ... They wonder about the causes of fortune and misfortune, and hold beliefs about the supernatural that contradict everything else they know about the world. They concoct theories of the universe and their place within it. ... The more biologically frivolous and vain the activity, the more people exalt in it. Art, literature, music, wit, religion, and philosophy are thought to be not just pleasurable but noble. They are the mind’s best work, what makes life worth living. Why do we pursue the trivial and futile and experience them as sublime? (Pinker, 1998, p.521)

So asks Steven Pinker. No doubt the spiritual comes under the same umbrella as those pursuits specifically referred to above. It may not be essential to life, but, as he acknowledges with those mentioned, it makes a positive contribution to the quality and understanding of life. Most consider spirituality to be important in their lives and feel that it contributes to their well-being (Gollnick, 2004, p.124; Carr, 1996, p.173). Crompton (1998, p.x) cites an old Indian proverb which describes the individual as, ‘a

house with four rooms, a physical, a mental, an emotional and a spiritual', advising that 'unless we go into every room every day, even only to keep it aired, we are not a complete person'. So are we to assume that developing the spiritual nature of a person along with spiritual experiences is something to be desired? If the answer is yes then what exactly is it that is both beneficial and desirable?

Some would say that it is essentially harmless and this is what makes it widely acceptable (Hay & Nye, 1998, p.8) unlike the more heated debate which surrounds acts of collective worship in schools. Others, however, are not so reticent in coming forward and identifying the positive benefits of nurturing the spiritual. It is seen as 'vital, effervescent, dynamic and life-giving' (Wright, 2000, p.7). 'Becoming aware of our spiritual dimension is the key for generating greater personal and social cohesion' (Lakhani, 2003). It enhances self-understanding (Wright, 2000, p.9) and is a door which leads to other areas of the self (Gilbert, 1998, p.49). The spiritual is 'an intense experience of harmony, to the sense that the organism is functioning with the greatest possible perfection' (Damasio, 2003, p.284; Jackson, 1997, p.235). It 'produces an inner peace, serenity, joy, purity of heart, and clarity of vision' (Hick, 1999, p.8). It revitalises and rejuvenates the person and puts things into perspective (Jackson, 1997, p.235). It helps us to put things in a wider context by assigning a more accurate meaning and value to experiences, events and material possessions (Zohar & Marshall, 2000, pp.187-191). It gives us the ability to discriminate (p.5). As such it is form of wisdom (p.196). The assumption is that a developed spirituality puts us in touch with reality (p.196).

It has been claimed that the awareness of finitude, a spiritual quality, cultivates humility (Sutherland, 1995, p.23). A spiritually developed person has ‘increased empathy, aesthetic sensitivity, ecological awareness, acceptance of bereavement, and altruistic feelings and behaviour’ (Jackson, 1997, p.227). It helps people to cope in a crisis and be more resilient in the face of trauma (Zohar & Marshall, 2000, p.193; Crompton, 1998, pp.38; 57; Gollnick, 2004, p.128). Those who ascribe a religious source to the experiences claim to feel both supported and stronger (Jackson, 1997, p.235; Hardy, 1979). As Durkheim (1915, p.416) said, ‘The believer, who has communicated with his god, is not merely a man who sees new truths of which the unbeliever is ignorant; he is a man who is *stronger*.’ Jung said of these experiences that it is really of no importance what the world thinks about them for ‘the one who has had such experiences possesses a great treasure, a thing which will be a source of life, meaning and beauty, and which will lend to the world and humanity a new splendour’ and asks, ‘where is the criterion by which such an experience shall be judged invalid and such faith mere illusion?’ (Jaffe, 1989, p.23)

If the spiritual is linked to the search for meaning and asking questions as Zohar and Marshall (2000) and others claim then this spiritual intelligence (SQ) has an evolutionary value in that it gives rise to ‘symbolic imagination, to the evolution of language, and to the extraordinary growth of the human brain’ (pp.4-5). If, as Wright (1999, p.39) suggests, the spiritual means grappling with ultimate questions and truths then there is clearly an intellectual aspect to the process. In dealing with existential problems it helps our brains to become creative (Zohar & Marshall, 2000, p.5). Spiritual education thus provides, or at least should provide, a healthy environment for individual growth to maturity (Bowness & Carter, 1999, p.233). By the very title

of their book – *SQ: Spiritual Intelligence. The Ultimate Intelligence* – Zohar and Marshall (2000) not only argue for its place in schools alongside IQ and EQ (emotional intelligence) but as the most important of the three, given its unifying capacity. They argue that Gardner’s seven kinds of intelligence can be reduced to one of three - IQ; EQ; and SQ (p.4.).

Their claim that it is a type of intelligence and therefore worthy of promotion is not something that Gardner (1999) accepts. He gives consideration to the possibility that spiritual intelligence might be a new candidate to his multiple intelligences along with naturalistic intelligence and existential intelligence (pp.45-66). He rejects the arguments for spiritual intelligence whilst accepting the other two as types of intelligence. He goes so far as to say that existential intelligence subsumes spiritual intelligence and thus does away with the problematic connotations associated with the latter. As he says, ‘an explicit concern with spiritual or religious matters would be one variety – often the most important variety – of an existential intelligence’ (p.60).

It would not profit us here to revisit the problems we encountered when looking for a definition of the spiritual but this does serve to illustrate how others prefer a different term which retains a concern for ‘ultimate’ issues, the transcendent and distinguishes us from animals (or so we think) but is more explicit in severing the link with the religious. Indeed much of what Gardner says in describing existential intelligence can be applied to the spiritual. Gardner even admits that existential intelligence is ‘a version of spiritual intelligence’ (p.64). Part of his difficulty is one we have encountered, and that is what makes experiences and reactions explicitly

spiritual as opposed to emotional and/or aesthetic. Gardner (pp, 65-66) reveals a key distinction between the two with the words:

I could with equal justification *decide that I am*, through intense engagements with art objects or with people I love, exercising my spiritual or existential intelligence, as I would if working with a guru. Thus I experience certain triggering events, or “affecting” objects and experiences that activate an existential intelligence. (My italics)

In other words the distinction between an emotional experience becoming also a spiritual experience is left to the individual to determine for themselves. This is the approach we will adopt when questioning students and teachers.

Just as it is argued that a healthy spirituality is good for the individual, it is also claimed that it is good for society as a whole. It contributes to social cohesion, especially as it is unconstrained by any particular religious tradition (Wright, 1998, p.vii). As the cultivation of the spiritual aspect of a person is supposed to reduce self-centredness it contributes to a society which is more concerned with the welfare of others (Hick, 1999, pp.47; 253). As Pinker (1997, p.526) argues, ‘many writers have said that the “function” of the arts is to bring the community together, to help us see the world in new ways, to give us a sense of harmony with the cosmos, to allow us to experience the sublime, and so on’. We could substitute the ‘spiritual’ for the ‘arts’. Pinker, however, is sceptical of the overstated value attributed to the arts and we might be prudent to do likewise for the spiritual.

Undoubtedly there are positive benefits to be gained from the spiritual side of life, but just as we have seen when looking at ‘spirituality and morality’ there can also be negative aspects to these experiences. Added to this not all would subscribe to the grandiose claims made for the spiritual dimension to life. There are some who would

argue that what might be considered the ultimate spiritual experiences, namely the mystical experience is far from beneficial in terms of the evolutionary process. As Rose (1976, pp.334-335) says,

Over the last 300 years the most effective utilization of the human brain has been brought about by way of organised activities of science. The “scientific” and cognitive functions are supremely the role of the cerebral cortex. The techniques of obtaining a mystic experience are (whether chemical or physical) those of diminishing the effectiveness of the cortex or temporarily blasting some of its circuits by means of food or sleep deprivation or by excessive sensory input or thrusting a biochemical spanner into the works. ...In so far as the function of the brain is to enable the organism to exist in harmony with, survive in, operate upon, and understand the environment of its owner, the non mystic brain manifestly functions better than the mystic one ...the mystic experience is low...in evolutionary terms...its effects may be moving and significant part of the experience of being human. But so for some may be...an epileptic fit.

Whilst schools are hardly in the business of encouraging pupils to have mystical experiences it does raise a note of caution about the educational value of spiritual experiences. Are we saying that those mild experiences which fall within what might be regarded as heightened but still normal limits are acceptable but the more extreme experiences are not? Spiritual development implies progress and a linear move forward from a less valued to a more valued state. It is unlikely that schools, or the rest of us for that matter, have an unambiguous idea about what the end state of this development should be? The religious person may have a clearer picture in that the ideal state, as the goal of the mystic, which is union with God. It also is in stark contrast to the claim that such experiences put you in touch with reality rather than removing you from it.

There is also a body of research which indicates that religious people rather than being better able to cope with the problems of life are more likely to experience anxiety and tension in their lives (Gollnick, 2004, pp.128-129). The positive influences of religion recognised by the likes of Francis (2005, pp.15-38) and Robbins (2005, pp.94-

106) are contested by Bernardin (2006, pp.22-28) and Provonsha (2006, pp.26-28). There is no good reason why this disagreement cannot apply to the spiritual as well as the religious. Spirituality, as with religion, is but one factor which may contribute to a person's well-being. As Bernardin (2006, p.25) says, 'social support and optimism are good for psychological adjustment, and religion and spirituality can provide these'. Sometimes religious and spiritual resources may be enough to offset the crises of life and sometimes they may not. To conclude that a spiritual or religious disposition is of positive benefit to the individual and humankind is both presumptuous and inaccurate.

After the London bombings on 7th July 2005 the Religious Education Council of England and Wales (REC) used the event to reinforce their belief in the value of religious education and the importance of provision for spiritual development in schools (REC website, 2005 – *Beyond the Bombings: Why RE Deserves a Central Role*). They claimed that 'students have been leaving school without the depth of religious and moral understanding, which would enable them to combine critical sensitivity with wider humanity.' Accompanying this release were extracts from the Ofsted inspection reports for the schools attended by the bombers. These focused upon the provision for spiritual development and religious education. Extracts from these three reports pertinent to this research include the following judgements:

- *Provision for pupils' spiritual development remains poor;*
- *Religious education provides insufficient opportunities for spiritual development but does help to promote moral, social and cultural development;*
- *Teachers do not provide enough guidance on spiritual issues;*
- *Pupils have a satisfactory attitude to religious and spiritual issues;*

- *The school's provision for pupils' spiritual development is unsatisfactory. Few departments plan to make effective use of opportunities offered by their subjects to promote pupils' spiritual development;*
- *In occasional lessons there are missed opportunities for the nurturing of pupils' spiritual awareness.*

Whilst the REC (2005) does admit that 'there is no complete certainty where human behaviour is concerned' the implication is that if these pupils had received good religious education and opportunities for spiritual development, then 'there is good reason to believe that the bombings would never have happened.' These claims border on the preposterous and seem more like an attempt to bolster the status of religious education and get schools to attach greater importance to opportunities for spiritual development. The majority of schools judged to have unsatisfactory religious education and provision for spiritual development do not produce people who commit acts of terror as a result. As Bernardin (2006) points out above, there are many factors which contribute to the kind of person we are and our school experiences of religious education and spiritual development are but small parts of the whole. What the claims of the REC do highlight, however, is that to be religiously educated and spiritually developed is a good thing in terms of the well-being of the community.

One could reasonably argue that the bombers were highly religious with a developed but misguided spirituality as one of the students interviewed during the course of this research argued that a spiritual person is one who displays 'fire and passion' and you cannot be more passionate than a suicide bomber. Would we apply the same judgements to those involved in the bomb plot to kill Hitler? There is evidence that spiritual experiences can prove to be disorienting and negative (Zohar & Marshall,

2000, pp.111-112; 165-169; Jackson, 1997, p.235; Gollnick, 2004, p.128). Once more this would be regarded as a bad spirituality, but it is nevertheless still spirituality.

Those who commit acts of terror in the name of their God in all probability believe they are doing the right thing. They believe they are in possession of the truth and thus by definition all who disagree with them are in error. If the claim put by some that being spiritually developed not only gives you a deeper insight into yourself but also reality, it calls into question the value of pursuing a false spirituality.

2.7 Spirituality and Truth.

In the film version of Douglas Adams' book *The Hitch Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy* the world builder Slartibartfast says to the main character Arthur Dent, 'I'd much rather be happy than right any day.' Happiness then is preferable to truth. Whilst individual happiness is not the principal concern of the spiritual, should not truth be an important factor in assessing its value, especially in an educational context? Is not education about, at least in part, a disinterested search for the truth? Searching for truth is considered both a noble and desirable human aspiration (Crompton, 1998, p.44). Is it not about 'learning how to evaluate arguments, and to sort truths from falsehoods'? (Mole, 2006, p.62) As Sutherland (1995, p.23) says, 'One marvellous capacity we all have, but which I suspect we under use, is the capacity to distinguish truth from error, true claims from false claims, truth from falsehood'. Clearly not all fully utilise this capacity, for people are capable of believing as true the most ridiculous things often in the face of evidence to the contrary (Russell, 1992, pp.73-99; Shermer, 2000). Is this the case with spiritual experience and if so does it really matter? Are we to agree with Kierkegaard when he said that 'truth is subjectivity'? (Mackintosh, 1964, p.215) Are

we to subject experiences and feelings to some kind of 'truth test' in order to be sure of their validity and accuracy?

According to Carr (1995, p.94; 1994, pp.221-238) spiritual enquiry qualifies as a truth-seeking enterprise. Truth seeking and truth finding are not, however, necessarily synonymous. As there is no overriding unity of expression or goal to spiritual experiences are we now to define the truth of the experience as relative to the person having the experience? Gilbert (1998, p.3) is sceptical of such an approach saying, 'this is true for you and its contradictory opposite is true for me syndrome cannot stand up to argument'. Even if talk of the spiritual uses the same language it is with very different dialects (p.11). Wright (1999, p.30) argues that in a climate of post-modern spirituality the 'truth' is that there is no truth. This is based on the view that there is no possible way of knowing if the spiritual insights of individuals give an accurate and truthful account of reality. If we accept this post-modernist premise, argues Wright, then it follows that in the context of spiritual development and spirituality truth is not important.

This is not the view of those who are convinced that the authenticity of experiences is to be judged against the teachings and dogmas of their respective traditions. This was the view of Paul in his first letter to the church at Corinth (I Corinthians 12) and echoed by Carson (1996, pp.558; 562). Carr (1996, pp.172-173) is sympathetic to this position in that a religious tradition or spiritual paths can help give meaning and make sense to an experience, but he also accepts that for some the experiences may cause them to reject the teachings of their traditions. When this is the case the faith traditions usually condemn the experiences as false and heretical and

there are sufficient examples throughout history of people suffering the consequences of claiming as authentic experiences which are contrary to the truth claims of the dogmas and creeds of their traditions (here authentic means true rather than merely beneficial or meaningful). As Camroux (1986, p.21) points out, absolute certainty in religion can be 'desperately dangerous'. Nevertheless, as Haldane (2003) says, spiritual development is intimately linked to the perceived truth of the accompanying metaphysical discourse. The way in which we conduct ourselves is (or at least should be) related to how we see the world or, as Haldane puts it, to adopt 'a demeanour appropriate to its content' (p.23).

If, as we have suggested earlier, spirituality and spiritual experiences are, in the main, life enhancing and transformative in that they give meaning and value to life, does it in some way undermine their efficacy if they are based on false premises and illusions? We have seen that there is great variety regarding these experiences and what is considered spiritual development within and between religions, and between religious and secular interpretations of experiences. Can all be right? Wright (1999) raises pertinent questions when he says that the atheist and the theist cannot both be right; therefore the spirituality of one must be flawed (p.35) and that if Islam is true then only Muslims have authentic spirituality (2000, p.27). One is bound to conclude that if there is a God and supreme religious truth 'He' wishes to convey to people 'He' does so in a confusing fashion that results in people grasping to receive it in an infinite variety of ways. We are, as Hick (1999, p.31) suggests, torn between running the risk of fooling ourselves by wishful thinking or of shutting out of our consciousness an immensely important fifth dimension of reality.

In trying to respond to these concerns we lead ourselves on something of a ‘wild goose chase’, for the question of authentic and ultimate truth is beyond our grasp. We might do better to follow the advice of the Buddha when he reasoned that much precious time can be wasted fruitlessly debating questions to which we can never know the answers and we would do better to focus on more immediate concerns such as the alleviation of suffering. The ultimate explanation of reality is not accessible to us and it is presumptuous to assume that it should be despite our inner desire for knowledge and understanding (Wright, 2000, pp.21-22). As Pinker (1998, p.561) says, ‘we are organisms, not angels, and our minds are organs, not pipelines to the truth’. Or as Zohar and Marshall (2000, p.205) say, ‘Truth is not limited or uncertain, but our view of it always is’.

To address these concerns should we adopt the view of Erricker (Erricker *et al.*, 1997) whose thorough-going post-modern relativism, according to Wright (1999, p.44), ‘leads him to the conclusion that since the truth and authenticity of a world-view can be judged only by the child, and never by an external observer, the child’s world-view is always by definition correct, and therefore not open to investigation and revision?’ This brings us back to the possible dangers of an idiosyncratic spirituality some of which may not only be false but pernicious.

Carr (2003) questions the ‘meaning-as-use’ theorists who claim that moral, aesthetic, religious and other judgements are not concerned to state the truth about the nature of things but rather have *prescriptive*, *commendatory* or *expressive* functions. The result is that *meaning* is secured at the price of *truth* (p.220). One could reasonably argue, however, that religions do make very strong claims about the nature of reality

and truth, despite the fact that much of what they say is culturally conditioned, with hopes and beliefs expressed by means of popular mythology. For mythology, with all its poetry and cultic expression, is a way of expressing what are regarded as religious truths. All, of course, can be wrong but all cannot be right. Carr (pp.221-222) claims that spiritual truths are distinguishable from ethical, moral and religious truths in that spiritual truth is not prescriptive and that they have different evidential grounds.

In order to safeguard against a worrying escalation of pseudo-truths associated with rampant individualism we need to temper our evaluations of the spiritual with reference to reason, shared objective reality and morality. This involves a combination of aspects of the coherence, correspondence and pragmatic theories of truth (for a summary of these see *Concise Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2000, pp.899-900; Honderich, 1995, pp.140;166-167;709-710;881-882). It is desirable for the experiences and views of the individual to agree or cohere with other beliefs they (and others) hold (coherence theory). The insights gained from these experiences should correspond to the world as we know it; in other words the facts (correspondence theory). The insights and experiences should prove to be beneficial not only to the individual but also to others and the wider community, thus assigning them a pragmatic value (pragmatic theory). Each of these truth theories is not without criticisms, but it is not necessary within the confines of this section to engage in a detailed philosophical analysis of these.

Wright (1999, p.45) properly contends that the appraisal of individual spirituality and world-views should be made against two clusters of questions.

- Are their views internally coherent? Do their stories make sense?

- How do they relate to alternative world views – both the world-view of the school within which they are being nurtured, and the world-views on offer within broader society?

This means a critical study of at least some of the spiritual paths and histories along with the provision for opportunities to explore and discuss one's own 'spiritual' thoughts and feelings. Thus, in subjects such as religious education it would involve, as Radford (1999, p.166) suggests, the process of exploring spiritual experience through conceptual frameworks provided by religious texts relevant to the spiritual interests of the pupils. This includes an acceptance of the possibility we may be wrong or misguided. Much of this comes through asking questions (Zohar & Marshall, 2000, p.205). Education for spiritual development should be, as Cottingham (2003, p.46) suggests, what a person must become to gain access to the truth and how access to the truth so gained has the power to transform elements of the subject. New insights into reality undoubtedly come through education. This is a two way process as the external world both informs and moulds us, but we also see and experience it from our own perspectives with its limitations. As Kant showed, the innate structure of being human (minds and bodies) determines what we can know. This is a constantly unfolding dynamic with the mind imposing its own imperative categories. As with a work of art, our experience of it is part a product of the work and part a product of our own construction (Radford, 1999, p.170.) They can be differing levels of interpretation and explanation which are not necessarily contradictory. As Gollnick (2004, p.123) says, 'because the human being is so complex, multiple viewpoints are often necessary to capture the truth of an experience or situation.' There are different but not mutually exclusive modes of knowing and this incorporates the spiritual. For example, when Ducasse (1971, p.224) says, 'what thought, desire, sensation, and other mental states

are like each of us can observe directly by introspection; and what introspection reveals is that they do not in the least resemble muscular contraction or glandular secretion, or any other bodily events', he is correct, but all he is doing is observing an event at one of its different levels. For if mind is the sum total of brain activity, then minds are features of brains, what Searle (1984, p.14) calls, 'surface features', and thoughts which are aspects of minds are not mysterious and immaterial but descriptions on a different level of the biological workings of the brain. They are 'different ways of classifying and interpreting our experiences' (Ayer, 1971, p.244). When we describe a mental event it can be described subjectively and, in theory, neurobiologically. It would 'represent equivalent statements in different universes of discourse, and can be translated one into the other' (Rose, 1976, p.29). As such, a spiritual experience or insight is not necessarily wrong because it is not subject to the usual rules of verification. A logical positivist position is not an appropriate stance to take. There will always remain a subjective and personal element whereby the spiritual occurrence is 'true' for the recipient, but for this truth to be assimilated and accepted by the wider community, and to some extent by the recipient, it should be measured against the criteria listed above.

2.8 Spirituality and Education

How then do we translate all of this into the practical day to day life schools?
What is the educational value of spiritual development?

2.8.1 Spirituality and schools

Few would argue with the sentiments of Bowness and Carter (1999, p.233) when they say that 'a spiritual education should provide a healthy environment for individual growth and place emphasis on the value of each person as they grow into

maturity.’ This involves not just thinking about spirituality but thinking about education. Spiritual education is apparently not limited to named subjects of the curriculum and is much more than a subject in its own right. It is meant to be cross curricular and all pervasive across the life of the school. According to Rodger (1996, p.60) it is a different way of *knowing*, *doing* and *being*. It has to do with the way in which institutions structure themselves that goes beyond the ‘drivelling uplift’ of mission statements (Williams, 1997, p.6). For Wright (2000, p.10), ‘routine education is transformed into spiritual education when pupils are brought to the threshold of ultimate meaning in the face of apparent absurdity.’ This rather grand statement hints at the possibility of its happening in most subjects and aspects of school life.

There are those, however, who take issue with the supposed cross curricular nature of spiritual education, regarding it as ‘misleading to the point of eccentricity’ and ‘wrongheaded’ to suggest that it ‘may occur whenever and wherever’ (Carr, 1995, p.95; 1996, p.162). To do so is ‘a recipe for confusion and miscommunication’ (Beck, 1999, p.165). It is, they claim, clearly more evident and accessible in certain subjects, such as religious education, arts, literature and music, than it is in others such as mathematics. McCreery (2001, p.12), however, found that amongst primary school teachers the three most popular subject areas in relation to the spiritual were science, art and PSHE (personal, social and health education) and the least popular were drama, mathematics and physical education. Part of this research will look at the views of students and teachers who have different subject specialisms and see if their views and attitudes towards promoting the spiritual differ. It will also look at the views of the respondents regarding their own schooling and which subjects of the curriculum and areas of school life in their view made the most positive and/or negative contribution towards their own

spiritual development. When analysing this data it is well not to jump to conclusions and to heed the cautious advice of Carr (1995, p.96) who points out that just because a subject is inspirational it does not necessarily mean it is spiritual.

2.8.2 Spirituality and the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child

The well-established and statutory place of the spiritual in the education of pupils in Britain is not central to the aims of education in the relevant Articles (29:1a and 1d) of the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child (Crompton, 1998, pp.3-24; UNICEF, 1995). Here the aims of education refer to the mental and physical development of children rather than the spiritual. It is in the Articles relating to disability (23) and labour (32) which identify spiritual well-being and development (Crompton, 1998, p.21; Schweitzer, 2005, p.104). For those who wish to do so it is possible to claim that the spiritual is implicit if not explicit in the Articles which refer to the aims of education. Schweitzer (2005, p.103) is of the opinion that the spiritual development of children has played a clear role in the struggle for children's rights ever since the first declaration on children's rights – the Geneva Declaration – was accepted in 1924, but accepts that the 1989 Convention fails to include a clear reference to children's rights to spiritual education. Whether or not the spiritual is central to education depends on how we conceive spiritual development and implement opportunities for this to take place. As Schweitzer (p.106) says, 'what really matters is not what is written in legal documents but what they (children) actually experience in the process of growing up'. This does, however, raise the question as to the importance and centrality of the spiritual in the education of pupils. Would the education of our children be any the worse if we dropped the word 'spiritual' from our guidance to and expectation of schools?

2.8.3 Spirituality and movements which have shaped education

It is not the intention here to embark upon a treatise on the nature and aims of education, but we cannot ignore the wider movements which have had an impact on the way in which education is understood. I have implied earlier that our current education system in state schools is essentially liberal and secular whilst still retaining a statutory obligation to the place and value of religious education and acts of collective worship. This is perhaps an over simplification, what we observe as happening in schools is a blend of a number of movements which have helped to form the way in which spirituality in schools is understood. Wright (2000) gives a comprehensive summary of these influences in his book *Spirituality and Education*. What we find is a curious mixture of materialism, empiricism, romanticism, existentialism, post-modernism and critical realism (See Bullock & Trombley, 1999, and Stewart, 1997 for a concise summary of these movements). Materialism and empiricism with their emphasis on concrete experience, objective reality and the need for verification are to be found primarily in the sciences and technologies of the curriculum. Here one might perhaps expect a tolerant but not altogether sympathetic view of the responsibility of schools to stimulate spiritual development. Romanticism provides a balance to this and to rationalism, with its emphasis on the importance of feeling, emotions and the subjective imagination. Here the emphasis is on the primacy of the perceiver on the world he/she perceives. Many of the notions of romanticism remain central to the modern mind and thus to education and finds expression in the arts, literature and music. Existentialism with its reaction against idealism has been embraced more readily on the continent than in Britain. It explores and investigates the peculiarities of human existence, the loss of certainties and how to live authentically. Wright's ultimate questions and concerns and Sutherland's focus on the awareness of our finitude as a means of spiritual development

incorporate and embrace this movement. Post-modernism like existentialism (Erricker appears to embrace both of these in his approach to children's spirituality) sees a move towards individualism with its rejection of grand narratives and totalistic explanations. There is less confidence in the old certainties. Its effect on spiritual development has been to encourage individualism and, as we have discussed above, the idiosyncratic truth of experiences and world views. Finally, critical realism takes a more sophisticated view of reason and experience and counters what Wright (2000, p.23) refers to 'as the dogmatic excesses of post-modernity'. It accepts that there is an independent reality which we can experience and thus derive knowledge from and is worthy of study. Clearly, this is the approach favoured by Wright (p.25) who says, 'Critical realism treads a path between absolute certainty and absolute relativism: we can obtain knowledge of reality, but such knowledge will always be contingent, always engaged in the process of striving for deeper understanding, always open to new insight'. Here we see the need to balance experience and feeling against knowledge of the world. The spiritual is to be evaluated and assessed against objective reality – or at least what we know of it.

If we consider all of the above we can see how schools have incorporated elements of each in the way in which they educate children. Ideally, schools advance evidence based approaches to learning, they encourage creativity and mutual respect for differences (within loosely defined parameters), and they promote critical reflection, shared values and positive attitudes and skills. Schools take their academic and pastoral responsibilities seriously and how well they do this is judged by the inspectorate. It is somewhat unfair of Zohar and Marshall (2000, p.152) to claim that in western education we have no deep sense of the educated human being or of education *per se*

and that we just teach our children subjects, or as Wright (1998, p.20) says that our current pedagogy is primarily concerned with social utility, vocational value and wealth creation. There are undoubtedly tensions, for, as Wright (1999, p.26) points out, science encourages pupils to turn inwards to reason whilst spiritual education, heavily influenced by romanticism, encourages children to turn inwards to their feelings. The two, however, need not be contradictory. I suspect most teachers see it as their responsibility to help children keep an open mind; enable them to explore different ways of seeing; and encourage children's personal awareness. These are three of the four main tasks teachers should engage in, according to Hay and Nye (1998, pp.165-172), when advocating spirituality in the classroom. They may not consciously be aware that they are addressing issues of spiritual development and fail to deal with the fourth of Hay and Nye's points: the nurturing of children's social and political dimensions of spirituality (pp.172-175). We shall see from the responses of students and teachers if they see it as one of their principal functions to endorse some or all of these four points.

2.8.4 Spiritual literacy

There are tests and examinations (maybe too many) to assess the academic progress and development of pupils. We have a fair understanding of what a literate and numerate person should be, even if there are insufficient numbers of these leaving schools according to British industry (Hackett, 2005; Paton, 2007, 2005; Kingston, 2009). Schools use a range of methods to advance children towards these goals. What methods do schools employ to create a spiritually literate person, assuming they know what one is? A true spiritual literacy, according to Wright (1999, p.46), is 'grounded in

academically sound, aesthetically informed, morally responsible and spiritually sensitive discourse’.

Many have contributed to the debate, both to suggest and to provide the means to promote spiritual development. Some have been more successful in advancing their ideas than others. Success, however, is not the sole criterion for judging the coherence and validity of an approach. We have already touched upon some of the ideas schools are advised to adopt in order to provide opportunities for spiritual development. Wright suggests having pupils wrestle with ultimate questions, meaning and truth, a view shared by Zohar and Marshall. As such, it is a search for knowledge and wisdom (Wright, 2000, pp.133-134). He would agree with Carr who believes this involves the study of a range of spiritual traditions and spiritual truths. Some, such as Keating (2001), specifically recommend using texts of the Wisdom literature as a means of raising these issues and considering the insights of at least some of the great traditions.

Here he argues (p.1) that:

students in their early years of schooling need to be more outwardly directed and receive their guidance from external sources of authority and to learn from society and its institutions what is socially valued and accepted. But, at the end of their schooling, they need to begin a process of inwardly evaluating what they have learnt, of constructing their own meaning, of making it their own, if they wish to enter adulthood.

This is sound advice for all aspects of education and not just the spiritual. Critical reflection on learning is one of the indicators of an educated person.

2.8.5 Spirituality and teachers

If, as is supposed, it is the teachers who are sources of authority required to introduce children to additional sources of authority on matters spiritual, then it

presupposes they have a knowledge and understanding of these matters. This is an assumption that is not necessarily borne out by the facts. Do teachers have a clear understanding of what is expected of them in terms of the spiritual development of the pupils in their charge? McCreery (2001, p.3) found that amongst the teachers she questioned there was a perceived absence of help in this area and most were left to their own interpretations and resources for dealing with it. This uncertainty and nervousness on the part of teachers was something she found confirmed by others researching in the field (Erricker & Erricker, 1997; Torrington, 1997). Not only this, but teachers themselves are involved in a personal search regarding their own spiritual development. As a result their own perceived spirituality and stage of spiritual development based on their life experiences and histories impact on the way they approach the topic in schools. Not surprisingly those with a specific religious commitment were more likely to be able to identify the spiritual in their work and those hostile to the statutory requirement for schools to teach religious education were more unreceptive to the notion of spirituality in schools (p.10). More mature teachers (40+) with years of experience and holding positions of seniority in the school were also more positive and confident in their views of the spiritual (p.13). This results, as McCreery says, in diverse and unpredictable approaches to dealing with the spiritual in schools. This diversity of interpretation which we have already touched upon is confirmed by Watson (2000, pp.91-101). The difference in approach to the spiritual is thus greater than that, between different teachers teaching the same subject discipline (McCreery, 2001, p.8).

This lack of confidence and diversity of approach, if an approach to the spiritual is adopted at all, is partly due to lack of training for teachers both before embarking upon their careers and subsequently (McCreery, 2001, p.14). Eaude (2001, p.1) found

that practically all the teachers he spoke to said they had received no training at all. Training institutions and schools may feel that they have more pressing priorities than to spend valuable time training teachers in this 'marginal' area. This may partly explain the Ofsted review of 1998 which judged nearly half the secondary schools as 'poor' at fostering spiritual development (Gay, 2000, p.63). This lack of explicit training is not necessarily the result of indifference towards the 'spiritual' on the part of students. Tacey (2002, pp.171-182) found that students at his university were deeply interested in spirituality and their own spiritual development but university teachers are reluctant to engage with this interest as a result of its questionable academic credentials. Pupils also believe that schools should be involved in their spiritual development (Watson, 2001, p.10), for most seek some kind of spiritual fulfilment (Zohar & Marshall, 2000, p.8) and schools can make a contribution towards this.

Given that the spiritual has been an integral part of education in this country from 1944 and before, this lack of explicit training should not be the case with those on initial teacher training courses. However, given the number of standards to be met in order to achieve qualified teacher status and the time in which training institutions have to address each of these, it is not surprising that the spiritual, if not neglected, is only give cursory attention.

Whether intentionally or not, teachers play a significant part in the formation of the spiritual development of the pupils in their charge. Indoctrination is not to be condoned or encouraged but neutrality is difficult, if not impossible, to sustain. As Wright (2000, p.16) says, 'those who acknowledge their prior philosophical commitments are likely to be better educators than those who fail to do so'. No longer

is it the case that teachers are expected to hide their views and beliefs, as long as they balance these and allow pupils to explore a range of perspectives. The liberal education found in schools, as Beck (1999, p.174) says, is neither intended to make pupils religious nor to prevent them from being religious, but to bring them to understanding. There is a fine balance between what Schweitzer (2005, p.107) terms as ‘perfect respect for the child and the need to make responsible choices for the child’. Children invariably ask questions and search for meaning and thus according to some have a natural spirituality (Coles, 1992; Zohar & Marshall, 2000). What strategies do and should teachers use to satisfy these needs and actively promote spiritual development?

2.8.6 Methods used to promote and address the spiritual development of children

In recent years there has been no shortage of advice on how schools might promote the spiritual development of pupils. The bulk of this is based on a given view of what we mean by spirituality and spiritual development. This is essentially inclusive and an exploration of inner experiences (Hammond, *et al.*, 1990; Stone, 1992). This position is primarily based on the work and standpoint of the likes of Hay and Erricker who, as we have seen, are not without their critics. Hay worked with Hammond and others on the publication of *New Methods in RE: An Experiential Approach* (1990) which quickly became a formative text and source of guidance for teachers, becoming ‘a new gospel for RE and spiritual development’ (Copley, 2000, p.99) (in the secondary sector of education these were primarily teachers of religious education). Despite the guidance coming from the various educational bodies stressing the whole school and cross curricula nature of the ‘spiritual’, it was usually assigned to the religious education specialist both to interpret and often deliver this component of education. Uncertainty, however, was not the prerogative of the non-specialist, and teachers of

religious education also welcomed help and direction on these matters. It was *New Methods in RE: An Experiential Approach* which came to their rescue and gave a steer to the direction the debate on 'spiritual development' was to take. As such it was a formative text (Copley, 2000, p.98). The essence of the work was to suggest strategies which encouraged pupils to explore their inner experiences (Hull, 1997, pp.8-9). This would enable them to become aware of the way in which they see the world and how theirs is only one of many perspectives (Hammond *et al.*,1990, p.6). It 'would help pupils to open their personal awareness to those aspects of ordinary experience which religious people take particularly seriously' (p.11). Part of the justification for this approach was based on the findings of research mentioned earlier that 'religious/spiritual experience' is widespread and a 'proportion of members of every class from about the third year upwards in the secondary school will believe that they have had such experiences'(p.15). Hay, agreeing with Hardy, accepted that the notion of spirituality is biologically built into the human species (Hay & Nye, 1998, p.16). To avoid the risk of at best ignoring, and at worst stifling (p.20), these important experiences the authors came up with classroom based activities which were designed to make children 'aware of and to take seriously their own inner experience and their potential to be aware'(Hammond *et al.*,1990, p.17). In engaging in these activities, designed to provide opportunities for spiritual development, pupils would become 'aware of the power of language and intention to structure our experience' (p.17) and 'demonstrate that there is more than one perspective to reality' (p.15). All are capable of exploring their inner experiences whether or not they have any religious convictions for all children have an innate capacity for spiritual awareness, what Hay and Nye identified as a 'relational consciousness', based on a sense of mystery and meaning in

life, a sense of their own identity and place in the world. This approach is thus both inclusive and personal.

This inclusive and personal, or even idiosyncratic, approach to spirituality is also found in the work of Erricker *et al.* (1997, p.30) and in *The Children and Worldviews Project*. Erricker adopts an even more radical approach towards the ever changing nature of spirituality and ‘ruling out the possibility of identifying an immutable biological essence of children’s spirituality’ (Wright, 2000, p.43). What Erricker and colleagues do is allow the children to say what they consider to be important and meaningful (Erricker *et al.*, 1997, p.34) to them and thus their individual subjective spirituality. As such he adopts not only an ‘inclusivist’ position but also a ‘relativist’ one (Meehan, 2002, p.296). Taggart (2002, p.60) refers to this approach as an example of ‘resistance postmodernism’ and Thatcher (1999, p.8) as ‘a kind of inclusive humanism’. The research identified recurring themes based on children’s hopes and fears and uncovered a rich vein of imagination in the search for identity and meaning. The recurring themes which children return to are: belonging and identity; violence and conflict; death, loss and family separation; God, heaven and hell; dens and special places; relationships with others; and the natural world. These contribute to the building of children’s sense of identity, in other word a spiritual self (Taggart, 2002, p.60). Erricker found that children display a far greater, moral, emotional and spiritual maturity that many give them credit for. Indeed, adults often avoid the issues children wish to talk about through inexperience, reluctance or discomfort. What Erricker does say is that adults, and this clearly includes teachers, can and should play an important role in supporting children with these matters.

Is this exploration of inner experiences really the way forward in providing opportunities for the spiritual development of children? Thatcher (1991, pp.22-27) is of the opinion that this fashionable experiential approach is deeply flawed. To identify a person primarily with his/her inner self is a misleading and philosophically spurious view of a human being (p.22). This individualism with its implied dualism is 'a crippling price to pay for this misidentification of spirituality with inwardness' (p.23). Thatcher's vitriolic attack on this approach is somewhat unfair as the proponents of it do not espouse a radical dualism but rather wish to illustrate the importance of experience and inner feelings in the search for the spiritual. In a response to Thatcher they categorically deny that their approach is 'a withdrawal into a private space which neglects community and cosmos' (Hay & Hammond, 1992, p.145). The activities in the book (*New Methods in RE: An Experiential Approach*) not only encourage children to become aware of their thoughts and feelings but also their bodies, senses and the environment around them (pp.146-147). This 'inner' approach and methodology is also central to most, if not all, religious traditions which emphasise prayer and meditation as a means of spiritual growth. 'Inwardness' as a metaphor points to depth rather than superficiality and it encourages us to focus on intention and meaning (p.145). By adopting these classroom strategies teachers would enable children to engage in the four main tasks, mentioned above, which help develop spirituality. [To remind us these are: helping children keep an open mind; enabling them to explore different ways of seeing; encouraging personal awareness; and nurturing children's awareness of the social and political dimensions of spirituality (Hay & Nye. 1998, pp. 163-172)].

What is questionable is whether the activities suggested by Hammond *et al.* and Erricker's conversations with children designed to explore their 'micro narratives' of

everyday life (Taggart, 2002, p.62) provide opportunities to develop the spiritual as well as the emotional and moral side of their lives. Perhaps this is an unfair question, for as we have seen, it is extremely difficult to differentiate clearly between the three and there is clearly an overlap between them. The self-knowledge, self-criticism and increased empathy which are claimed to be the by-products of this guided introspection are not necessarily 'spiritual' qualities. Indeed, much of what passes for 'spiritual' development may be better described as emotional and moral development. If we leave it to the individual to decide for himself/herself we once more run the risk of fostering a personal and possibly eccentric spirituality and of being accused of advancing the 'scourge of relativism' (Taggart, 2002, p.61). As a means of countering this it is important to retain what Taggart (p.61) and others refer to as a 'relational quality' whereby we measure and qualify our experiences against those of others both present and past. Erricker is not unaware of the inherent dangers of his approach and rejects 'an anything goes' relativism in favour of a philosophical relativism which appreciates and respects the divergence of views (p.63). Whilst taking account of the reservations we raised in the section *Spirituality and morality* (2.2), the important binding and qualifying factors of 'good' spiritual development are shared values and moral outcomes, and a spirituality which in some way changes lives. It is noteworthy that the Errickers regard spiritual education as a means to spiritual activism against capitalist globalising economic practices. Spiritual education involves encouraging a sense of fairness and justice which young people have. Again, critics may well say that this is more akin to socialist moralising than spiritual development. Also, as Carr (2003, p.216) implies, there is a hint of manipulation, despite the claimed freedom of exploration, in this desire, however laudable, to promote justice. 'Recent policy

proposals', he says, 'have often been themselves unashamedly *instrumental* in their explicit focus upon the social, economic and therapeutic benefits of spirituality'.

Other reservations can be levelled at this approach of encouraging children to embark on mental or spiritual journeys through 'guided fantasies', 'creative visualisations' (Hammond *et al.*, 1990; Stone, 1992) or classroom meditation (Erricker & Erricker, 2001b). One of these is the concern about the unpredictable outcomes of such activities and the possible 'demons' which might be activated and released. As Miller (2002, p.74) contends, teachers are not trained therapists and should be cautious about blurring the boundaries of their different roles. If this is the case is it little wonder that teachers may well choose quietly to ignore their responsibility to provide opportunities for the spiritual development of those in their charge? But, if as Carr and Haldane (2003) assert that spirituality is a distinctive feature of human development, then an obvious corollary of this is that there will be distinct educational implications of either ignoring it or actively fostering it. What is required is a clear context and framework within which these activities are to take place.

Spiritual development implies some kind of progress. Just as pupils progress through the levels of the national curriculum so, it is to be assumed, they might progress upwards in spirituality. At least this appears to be what is implied in the term 'spiritual development'. Zohar and Marshall (2000, p.263) even specify seven steps to assist progression from a 'spiritually dumb to spiritually intelligent' person. These seven steps to achieving a greater spiritual intelligence are:

- Become aware of where I am now.
- Feel strongly that I want to change.

- Reflect on what my own centre is and on what are my deepest motivations.
- Discover and dissolve obstacles.
- Explore many possibilities to go forward.
- Commit myself to a path.
- Remain aware there are many paths.

There is little that is controversial in this advice, but it tends to read like the aims and objectives of a series of careers lessons or the kind of general life style opinion you might find in a popular magazine.

Whilst spiritual progress or development is desirable it may well be a wrongheaded way of looking at it in a school context. Linear development in matters spiritual, like matters religious, is by no means a guaranteed certainty and is notoriously difficult to ascertain. For example, is the religiously mature person one who has a good academic knowledge and understanding of a wide range of religions but does not believe in God or one who accepts and believes all that his/her religion tells him/her? Indeed, some are of the opinion that our current education system actively stifles the natural spirituality of children (Hay & Nye, 1998, p.18). Unlike other areas of the curriculum there is no universally accepted test for the spiritual level of the child; nor should there be. All schools can do is encourage a process which makes room and space for spiritual growth to happen.

How are they to do this? In order to answer this question we need to pull together all the disparate yet interconnected strands of this chapter.

2.9 A synthesis of spirituality for schools

In view of what has been said of spirituality and spirituality in schools we are left in little doubt that it is a complex and controversial subject which gives rise to strong views and heated debate. What are teachers and children to make of all this? As Beck (1999, p.172) says,

Perhaps regrettably – but also inevitably – there is a sense in which schoolchildren are *always* too immature to apprehend such matters in anything like their full complexity. (So, for that matter, are many adults!) But then, education in schools is often necessarily an exercise in legitimate simplification. How else did any of us come to understand an area of complex human activity?

Whilst we should not indulge in over simplification, teachers would benefit from coherent and practical guidance and advice on ways in which they could provide opportunities for the spiritual development of pupils. In order to attempt to provide this we need to summarise the key conclusions of the previous survey. There is a danger of over simplification when doing this, for as Wittgenstein said, ‘When all you have is a hammer, everything looks like a nail’ (cited Zohar & Marshall, 2000, p.228).

At the outset we aimed, as far as is possible, to arrive at a comprehensive and convincing a picture of spirituality, spiritual experience and spiritual development in current literature. Assuming we have arrived at some kind of acceptable picture of what it is and what it is not, we also want to consider how we might translate and apply these findings into the most appropriate methods, processes and content of what might be regarded as good spiritual education. The conclusions we arrive at are then to be compared with the current views of a selection of teachers and students on initial teacher training programmes. In other words, what are the views of current and prospective teachers who will be charged with the task of addressing this aspect of educational provision and who in all likelihood will not have spent a great deal of

time researching or even considering how best to do it? What is a school to make of post inspection recommendation which instructs the school to, ‘improve spiritual education’ (Abertillery Comprehensive, Estyn, 2001) and ‘further improve the school’s provision for the spiritual development of pupils’ (Bryn Hafren, Estyn, 2006)? An action plan drawn up by the school is duty bound to address these key issues and recommendations and remedy the ‘infrequent opportunities for reflection’ (Bryn Hafren, Estyn, 2006) identified as a significant failing in the school’s provision for opportunities for spiritual development.

The conclusions we have arrived at in our survey of literature may be summarised as follows:

- ‘Spirituality’ and ‘spiritual development’ are not the same as morality and moral development but the moral is a legitimate means by which to assess the efficacy and value of the former. In all probability teachers are more comfortable with their understanding of moral development than they are with spiritual development.
- Whilst spirituality may often find expression through religion it is not synonymous with it. Spiritual experiences and development can and do form a part of the experiences of those subscribing to a wide range of life styles and world views, both secular and religious. Thus, an inclusive approach to spirituality and spiritual development by schools is both rationally sound and desirable.
- A precise definition is well nigh impossible and runs the risk of controlling and restricting ‘spirituality’ and ‘spiritual development’ within narrow and exclusive parameters. It is better and more acceptable to identify the principal

characteristics of ‘spirituality’ and ‘spiritual development.’ Some kind of definition is helpful to teachers and schools, but this needs to tread the difficult and paradoxical path of being both concise and broad enough to include a variety of interpretations, what Heimbrock (2004, pp.119-131) refers to as ‘precise inexactness’.

- The principal characteristics incorporate transcendence, positive relationships, and a search for meaning and truth. Schools can address these by inspiring and stimulating pupils through the curriculum; by promoting a positive school ethos which is one of mutual care, respect and a recognition of the intrinsic value of the individual and the wider community; and by allowing and encouraging pupils to ask questions and explore complex issues of meaning and values.
- The experience of the ‘spiritual’ is widespread and can make a positive contribution to ‘wholeness’ and well-being. Schools should focus on the positive aspects of spiritual development and what constitutes ‘good’ spirituality.
- ‘Spirituality’ and ‘spiritual development’ in schools ideally balance process and content. They encourage critical reflection of ‘inner’ feelings and experiences – one’s own and those of others. Those of ‘others’ include not just one’s own contemporaries within the educational establishment and the immediate community but also the teachings and insights of the great traditions and teachers (both religious and secular) on matters ‘spiritual’, both past and present.

- Looking ‘inwards’ and ‘outwards’ provides a balance and counters the charge of idiosyncratic spiritual indulgence on the one hand and censorious evaluation of what constitutes the ‘spiritual’ against set criteria on the other.
- Addressing matters ‘spiritual’ means not shying away from sensitive and difficult issues and topics such as loss and death. Insights into meaning and values come through a range of human emotions.
- Both teachers and pupils are on a journey of exploration, and schools should focus on creating the circumstances in which ‘spiritual development’ may take place and restrain themselves from attempting to force and ‘level’ the spiritual progress of pupils. Success criteria can be based only upon pupils’ knowledge and understanding of ‘spiritual’ traditions and the skill of critical reflection. Much of what is seen as spiritual development may well take place in the private sphere of a person’s life and children, as much as adults, have a right to privacy in this domain and should not be ‘forced’ to reveal their innermost thoughts and feelings. Nonetheless, schools should still provide an appropriate context in which they are able to talk about issues and matters which are important to them.

The essence of the above summary may be usefully encapsulated in what has become the key feature of ‘good’ religious education; namely ‘learning about’ and ‘learning from’ religion. So good spiritual education would involve the school in planning opportunities for ‘spiritual development’ to take place, and providing an environment which is conducive to, ‘learning about’ and ‘learning from’ spirituality. This combines the academic and the experiential and can take place across a range of

subjects of the curriculum and aspects of school life and school ethos, though opportunities are more readily available in some subjects and some areas than others.

Even when schools take their responsibility to provide opportunities for spiritual development seriously the nature of the task will always remain something of an enigma given the differing views on the topic. We should have some sympathy for those who consider the requirement an unnecessary burden on schools. Dawkins (2007) is firmly of the opinion that there is a danger of over-valuing and over-emphasising the spiritual in education. Is it not enough to deliver and keep up-to-date with the ever changing curriculum? Is it not enough to expect schools to provide a place when pupils' moral, social and cultural attitudes and skills are developed and enriched without the encumbrance of the mysteries of the spiritual? Is it not the principal wish of parents that schools provide expertise and guidance for their offspring in the subjects they study and create an ethos of fairness and respect and better to leave matters spiritual to them? Is not our spiritual development (along with a lot of others aspects of our development) the way in which we react and respond to what life throws at us?

The answer to all of the above questions is a qualified 'yes'. But as school is a part of life, and a very important and formative part of life, we are bound to encounter the 'spiritual' there whether it is planned or not. How much better it would be for all concerned that this is recognised, understood and not left to chance. As Heimbrock (2004, p.131) argues:

Multicultural society needs people who are informed and can choose with regard to ultimate questions by applying knowledge insight and argument. Applying ethical criteria and finding practical consequences to shape their own life in a meaningful way. Civilized society needs

individuals who have developed ways of expressing and communicating their emotions ... who have language for their deepest longings and anxieties and for encounters with the beautiful and uncanny in their lives.

Now it is time to discover the views of those about to be and already in the 'front line' of this process. Are they prepared for the challenges and expectations which await them in matters 'spiritual'?

Chapter 3

Methodology

3.1 Setting a research design

At the outset it was stated that the aim of this research was to elicit the perceptions of teachers and students on undergraduate and postgraduate ITET courses on their understanding of spirituality and spiritual development in their personal and professional lives. The rationale at the beginning of this work outlines my interest in this topic and reasons for wishing to investigate it further. The way in which these perceptions were to be collected was the result of much reading and advice, with some changes of direction along the way. It was eventually decided to gather these perceptions by conducting a cross-sectional survey of the views of teachers and students over a number of years (2001-2005) using questionnaires and interviews. With this goal in mind it was necessary to carefully construct questionnaires (see appendices) with research questions which would provide the information required to address the original research aim. An initial version of the questionnaires was piloted to evaluate the suitability of the questions for achieving this aim and after minor refinements distributed to the target group.

The decision to adopt these methods and ask particular questions came after exploring the literature; both specific to the topic and more general in terms of research paradigms. The literature specific to the topic which has been covered in chapter two identified key issues and controversies related to the ‘spiritual’ and ‘spiritual development’ and assisted in the formulation of questions to be asked and the development of categories when analysing the data collected. The research of others into this field provided useful insights into the methodologies they used to

arrive at their conclusions. Some aspects I adopted whilst others I deliberately rejected. The reasons for this will be explained in this chapter. There was always the possibility that my findings would merely replicate the research findings of others. Whilst this is in itself no bad thing as it adds to the body of research evidence, it would add little of additional insight into the problem. The outcomes cannot (or rather should not) be predetermined and it was only after the data was collected and analysed that the outcomes would be discovered. Naturally, it was hoped that the findings would add to the field of interest and the ongoing debate.

The empirical, localised setting of the research was mainly in the department of education at a university in South East Wales (hereafter referred to as *Metropolitan University*, and where I am employed as a senior lecturer). The institution is the largest provider of teacher training in Wales and also delivers a popular Master's professional development course for qualified teachers and other education professionals. In order to extend the target group to ensure the inclusion of those specialising to become teachers of religious education (a subject specialism which is not offered on the secondary post-graduate course at *Metropolitan University*) questionnaires were distributed to another provider in South West Wales (hereafter referred to as *County Town University*). *County Town University* was selected as it is has a well established PGCE course in religious education and I have good relations with the senior lecturer responsible for this course.

After taking note of a word of caution given by Martin Ashley at a conference (with whom the author fundamentally disagrees) we will briefly consider the various classic research paradigms; the methodologies used by others researching into this

field and the reasons for the value of a mixed methods approach and for adopting a methodology based primarily on questionnaires, supplemented with interviews.

3.2 Ontological, epistemological and methodological decisions

Delivering a paper entitled ‘Empathy, Experience and Spirituality’ at the Eighth International Conference on ‘Education, Spirituality and the Whole Child’ (2001), Martin Ashley argued that, ‘you don’t get to know spirituality through questionnaires.’ In the accompanying printout of the paper he stated,

My intuition is that, in the field of spirituality, only a form of *deep ethnography* will yield the data that are required to fulfil this aspiration. As Hollway and Jefferson (2000) remind us, “rubbish in, rubbish out”. If spirituality refers to deep matters of the inner psyche, a deep methodology is surely required (Ashley, 2001, p.2).

As such, he was wary of the appropriateness of a ‘dispassionate statistical analysis’ when researching ‘key questions of ontology and epistemology’ and then ‘claiming to produce trustworthy knowledge on the basis of disclosures about the deeply personal’ (p.1). This was a word of warning, especially when the principal method used in this research was the questionnaire. How can we reconcile the views of Ashley with the conclusions reached, based on what he considers a questionable methodology? First, we need to consider the nature of and approaches to educational inquiry, in other words research paradigms. Following this, consideration will be given to strategies used by researchers in the field of educational research and in particular the methods used by those who have conducted research into ‘spirituality’ and ‘spiritual experience’. In doing so we will give reasons for the methods adopted in this research and evaluate their effectiveness in informing us of perceptions students and teachers hold concerning ‘spirituality’ and ‘spiritual development’ in schools.

At the outset, however, it is appropriate to remind ourselves yet again of the aims of this research, which were to discover what ‘spirituality’ and ‘spiritual development’ meant to teachers and prospective teachers and how far these meanings conformed to the ‘official’ guidance (covered in chapter one) available on what ‘spirituality’ and ‘spiritual development’ are. How did they interpret and to what extent did they implement their professional responsibilities in this area? Was there a correlation between teachers’ and students’ own ‘spiritual experiences’ and the way they perceived their role of providing and delivering opportunities for ‘spiritual development’ and acting as catalysts in the ‘spiritual development’ of those in their charge? What importance and priority did they ascribe to this aspect of their professional duties and responsibilities? Did these views vary according to gender, length of service, the age phase in which they taught or trained, and subject specialism? In the light of the findings accrued should we continue to defend the statutory status and protection which ‘spirituality’ and ‘spiritual development’ currently enjoy in our educational system? As we have seen in chapter one, the statutory protection afforded to this area of pupil development still remains.

The reasons for selecting a survey using questionnaires and interviews to answer these questions will be explained in the following sections.

3.3 The Nature of Inquiry – research paradigms

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) state that there are three important approaches to educational inquiry. These are: (i) the positivistic and scientific approach; (ii) naturalistic approaches; and (iii) critical theory. In the sections that follow, we shall discuss each of these paradigms and their relevance to the present

study and explain the ontological and epistemological decisions I took when deriving my own methodology for the present study.

3.3.1 The Positivist and Scientific Approach

It was the French philosopher and social theorist Auguste Comte (1798-1857) who stressed the importance of observation and reason as a means of understanding behaviour and who is thus regarded as the father of French positivism. His so-called scientific approach, superseding the theological and metaphysical stages of human development, rejects as illegitimate all that cannot be directly observed in the investigation and study of any subject (Kremer-Marietti, 2000, p.158). This is a purer form of understanding 'where one confines explanation to the expression of verifiable and measurable correlations between phenomena' (Ruse, 1995, p.145). This approach was adopted and refined by the likes of John Dewey (1859-1952) and his philosophy of Pragmatism and those who associate themselves with the movement known as 'logical positivism'. As Geen (Geen *et al.*, 2007, p.22) says of the former:

Dewey asserts that in order to attain knowledge and to ascertain the truth a person needs to follow the scientific processes of examining data, forming hypotheses, anticipating the consequences of each when implemented, and testing these hypotheses in action. Conclusions are drawn on the basis of observation and the correlation of the actual with the anticipated consequences.

Logical positivists argued that truly meaningful statements are dependent upon a method of verification. Consequently, many of the claims and statements made by religion are meaningless in that they are unverifiable. The same reasoning may be applied to much of what counts for the 'spiritual' and 'spirituality'. If this is the case are we able to research the spiritual using a positivist and scientific approach? Are we able to apply the principles of science to responses about feelings, experiences and

human behaviour? Burns (2000, p.4) cautions us about straying from this approach for the alternative:

Namely, lay person's intuition, subjective judgement and common sense – provides in most cases, information and theories which are neither common, in that they are generally agreed upon, nor make “sense”, in that they are rational. We are well aware that many of our everyday observations and opinions are distorted in the very act of being made subjective through bias and prejudice. We stereotype others on scanty evidence and generalise conclusions well beyond any valid range of generalisation.

This, he claims, leads to ‘woolly armchair philosophising’. What can be more subjective than ‘spirituality’ and ‘spiritual experiences’? Has it not been the case that many of the decisions regarding the spiritual in education have been (and still are) based upon personal ideologies, faith commitments and preconceptions rather than a ‘scientific’ examination of the facts of the situation? All this is true to some extent and a naturalistic and interpretive paradigm is covered in the next section but this positivistic paradigm is open to the justified criticism levelled at logical positivism.

Human beings are endowed with a consciousness which enables them to reflect on their own behaviour. We are both self-conscious and self-reflective. As Ryle (1971, p.249) says, ‘in consciousness, self-consciousness and introspection he (the person) is directly and authentically apprised of the present states and operations of his mind. He may have great or small uncertainties about concurrent and adjacent episodes in the physical world, but he can have none about at least part of what is momentarily occupying his mind’. From this we see that there are different types of interpretation of the same event and the subjective level of interpretation is none the less evidential, despite being different from a ‘scientific’ description. We, perhaps, need to remind ourselves that the purpose of this research was not to determine the

veracity of spiritual experiences or even apply Popper's theory of falsifiability (Popper, 1963), whereby ideas are subjected to rigorous testing and only remain true as long as they are unrefuted (Grayling, 2006, p.162), in order to apply a criterion to our research which enables us to refer to it as 'scientific' rather than 'pseudo-scientific'. The intention was to gather both quantitative and qualitative data on teachers' and students' experiences, perceptions and practices. These might be from individuals, as the participants themselves were clearly unique individuals, but we could look for collectively shared norms and beliefs in the responses they offered. The limitations of a traditional positivist or scientific approach now become obvious. As Burns (2000, p.10) puts it, 'it fails to take account of people's unique ability to interpret their experiences, construct their own meanings and act on these'. For, as Weber (1949, p.81) says, 'all knowledge of cultural reality, as may be seen, is always knowledge from a particular point of view'. This Kantian view of reality being coloured by our perception of it means we can never really know what things are independent of our modes of perception and thought. Kant's (1788, 1949) distinction between the world of phenomena and the noumenal world is between things as they are in themselves and the world as it appears to us.

The positivistic and scientific approach is thus open to the charge of applying a mechanistic and reductionist approach to the complex and highly individual nature of spirituality and to rely solely on this methodology when investigating spirituality is bound to be restrictive. We have mentioned in the previous chapter the difficulty of trying to assess the success or failure of a person's spiritual development and, as such, must question an approach which defines life in measurable terms, thus excluding

‘notions of choice, freedom, individuality, and moral responsibility’ (Cohen *et al.*, 2007, p.17).

Nevertheless, this research could and did make use of scientific methods. A statistical analysis of quantitative data played an important role in determining the percentage of respondents who, for example, claimed to have had a spiritual experience and consequently adopted a more positive approach to the place of spiritual development in schools. Specific research questions (questions 1,2,5,6,8,10,11,12,13 and 14 – student questionnaire; questions 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,11,13 and 14 – teacher questionnaire; see section on *questionnaire design* and appendix 1 & 2) gave access to ‘facts’ about the respondents including some biographical information and statements about belief (Silverman, 2006, p.119). This was to discover if there was a correlation between these personal experiences and classroom practices and respondents’ views on ‘spirituality’ and ‘spiritual development’; to ascertain if the former contributed to the latter. Coupled with this, however, was the opportunity for respondents to make extended qualitative comments on their experiences. Respondents interpreted and ascribed meaning to their experiences and actions. Thus, a statistical positivist approach was combined with a naturalistic interpretivist one. This provides correlation between ‘social facts’ and ‘social meanings’ and, as we intend to show, carefully constructed questionnaires are capable of providing a rich source of information which fulfils both aspects. The primary concern was with grasping ‘meanings’, however complex, rather than discovering ‘truths’. This leads us to *naturalistic approaches* to research methodology.

3.3.2 Naturalistic Approaches – interpretivism, phenomenology, ethnomethodology and symbolic interaction.

Whilst the many schools of thought which embrace this approach are considered to be anti-positivist, it is perhaps more helpful to see it as complementary to rather than in competition with a scientific approach, though, given the nature of this research, we shall lean towards an interpretation of the different perceptions and viewpoints and therefore favour a naturalistic standpoint. This involves a marriage of the positivist approach and the naturalistic approach. Such a reconciliatory approach Weber (1949) considered to be preferable to using one to the exclusion of the other. The significance of spirituality and spiritual experiences in people's lives is decidedly individual and, as we have argued in chapter two, one of its key characteristics is its potential to be transformative. Spirituality is predominantly a subjective matter for both researchers and respondents. If spirituality is an inbuilt biological condition of being human (Hardy, 1979; Hay, 1987; Hay & Nye, 1998; Webster, 1990) then the researcher inevitably shares the same frame of reference with those being researched. This can be somewhat of a mixed blessing inasmuch as the researcher may well have a shared insight into the topic based on similar views and experiences and thus bring to the research his/her own biases which subsequently influence the selection and interpretation of the data gathered. To explore this shared private world a methodology is required which facilitates access to the significance and meanings individuals apply to what they regard as spiritual, and the practical and professional consequences of these experiences. Our understanding will then be coloured not only by our own experience and understanding but by the various standpoints of the individuals who are being investigated. As Cohen *et al.* (2007, p.22) say:

The data thus yielded will include the meaning and purposes of those people who are their source ... Thus theory becomes sets of

meanings which yield insight and understanding of people's behaviour. These theories are likely to be as diverse as the sets of human meanings and understandings that they explain.

The principal theoretical frameworks through which this naturalistic approach is manifested is based on the assumption that individuals have different perceptions and that reality can be understood only by sharing their viewpoints. The significance of subjective experience or rather subjective truth in paradoxical contrast to the more obviously accepted objective or scientific truth is seen as stemming from the Danish philosopher Kierkegaard (1813-55). The former might be 'unscientific', but it is not meaningless or irrational as it refers to an outlook on life (Honderich, 1995, p.857). It is a way of 'existing', hence the association of Kierkegaard with the foundations of existentialism. Indeed we have already seen that Gardner (1999, pp.45-66) believes that spiritual intelligence can be subsumed by the term existential intelligence.

Specific variants of qualitative naturalistic research paradigms include approaches derived from the philosophy of phenomenology which is the 'study of direct experience taken at face value' (Cohen *et al.*, 2007, p.22). Two of the most notable proponents of this approach are Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) and Alfred Schutz (1899-1959). Husserl saw phenomenology as an *a priori* investigation of essences or meanings, the objective logical elements in thought that are common to different minds (Torrance, 1999, p.645). Here stress is placed on the importance of subjective consciousness and how it actively confers meaning on life. It was Schutz who tailored Husserl's methods to investigate the assumptions involved in everyday social life. For him persons ascribe meanings to lived experiences via a process termed 'meaning reflexivity' whereby they engage in a process of 'typification' transforming

and making sense of the basic stream of meaningless sense-experience into 'stocks of knowledge' which are shared with others.

Another variant of naturalistic research paradigms is ethnomethodology (literally 'writing about people') which is concerned with the ways people make sense of the everyday world, social episodes being analysed in terms of the outlook of the actors (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). People are more than mere subjects of research but are experts whose cultural and perceptual world the ethnographer wishes to explore. As Burns (2000, p.393) succinctly puts it, 'Ethnography essentially involves descriptive data collection as the basis for interpretation'. No longer is ethnographic research an anthropological investigation of the ways of 'strange' and 'different' people in distant lands. It sets out a methodology which can be applied in a variety of contexts much closer to home. Thus teachers' and students' perceptions and definitions are typical concerns for the ethnographer. In addition ethnography acknowledges that perceptions and subsequent behaviour take place within a context. What happens in schools and the classroom occurs against a backdrop of beliefs, values, interests 'concerning what it means to be a student or teacher, and what constitutes worthwhile knowledge and learning' (Burns, 2000, p.394). It is the relationship between these two which this research in part examines.

Cohen *et al.* (2007, p.167) draw attention to the problems for the researcher in this field when they say:

The social and educational world is a messy place, full of contradictions, richness, complexity, connectedness, conjunctions and disjunctions. It is multilayered, and not easily susceptible to the atomization process inherent in much numerical research.

They go on to outline the key characteristics of the qualitative, naturalistic and ethnographic research paradigms (pp.167-171). These include the symbiotic relationship between ways in which people construct their own meanings and social situations which are, in turn, interpreted; how realities are multiple, constructed and holistic and, above all, how inquiry is influenced by the choice of paradigm that guides the investigation into the problem. There are other aspects which show how qualitative methods are to be preferred when investigating perceptions of ‘spirituality’ and ‘spiritual development’. These include the way in which meaning is continuous and evolving over time; how history and biography intersect and how meanings and understanding replace proof.

For LeCompte and Preissle (1993, p.235) ethnographic research is a process involving methods of inquiry, an outcome and a resultant record of inquiry. Thus the intention is to create as vivid a reconstruction as possible of the culture or group being studied. Consequently, as Lincoln and Guba (1985, pp.39-43, cited Cohen *et al.* 2007, p.168) imply that purposive samples are more likely to allow the full scope of issues to be explored and that data analysis tends to be inductive (arising from the data) rather than *a priori* or deductive (the discovery of existing pattern or order). In contrast to the positivist approach the naturalistic and qualitative is ‘its reluctance to enter the hypothetico-deductive paradigm not least because there is a recognition that the researcher influences the research and because the research is much more open and emergent in qualitative approaches’ (Meinefeld, 2004, p.153 cited Cohen *et al.* 2007, p.173).

Social interaction or symbolic interactionism, which was first put forward by George H. Meade (1863-1931) a prominent member of the Chicago School of Sociology, carries on with the self-society relationship. This was further developed by researchers like Erving Goffman (1922-1982). Here the distinguishing feature of people is their capacity to store and express an enormous number of symbolic or conventional meanings and to express these in words and actions. These agreed meanings are learned through the process of symbolic interaction (Barrett, 1999, p.851). Researchers of this school are interested in the symbols people use and the dynamics of interaction between them (Geen *et al.*, 2007, p.174) – in other words seeing yourself as you are seen by others. The process of meaning attribution is continuous and always emerging. The cross-sectional survey method adopted in this research can only give a snapshot of the meanings respondents attribute to ‘spirituality’ and ‘spiritual development’ and, as Chambers (2003, p.402) warns, “truer” responses might develop over time.

A question which arises here, and one that has been levelled as a criticism against those who adopt the naturalistic approach, is how far the views of the respondents have been shaped by the institutions and structures within which they operate, and how far their perceptions shape the institutions? (Bernstein, 1974) In brief, are teachers controlled by educational institutions and legislation, or do teachers determine the nature of the schools and educational legislation? The answer is something of both, but the greater demand for accountability within our educational system, which quickened from 1976, has led to increased centralisation of education policy (Locke, 1974; Beecher & Maclure; 1978; Kogan, 1978, 1986; Chitty & Dunford, 1999; Geen *et al.*, 2007, pp.149-153). As such, teachers’ freedom and flexibility in the delivery of the National Curriculum and other legislative

requirements has been somewhat curtailed. We have seen that there are both statutory orders and subsequent guidance on spirituality in schools. In theory these should, if not determine, then at least influence the responses of teachers, both actual and prospective. Needless to say, the understanding and actions of the teachers have a bearing on how the legislation and guidance are applied in schools. Thus, the very nature of this research deals with both normative and interpretive paradigms. The former is where human behaviour is essentially rule-governed and investigated by the methods of natural science whilst the latter focuses on the individual and the subjective world of human experience. The actions of teachers are to a greater or lesser degree both rule-governed and individualistic. Teachers both respond to the demands placed upon them (normative paradigm) which may be seen as an external environmental stimulus whilst at the same time they engage in internal intentional behaviour and actions (interpretative paradigm).

It was not the intention of this research to manipulate or control the settings within which the respondents operated other than to prompt them to think about and share their thoughts and perceptions on 'spirituality' and their part in the 'spiritual development' of pupils in schools. They were being asked to consider the natural settings of their daily experiences of their own spirituality and their part in the spiritual development of their pupils. Whilst both positivist and interpretivist elements are contained within this research it does lean towards the interpretive approach with its attempt to understand the subjective world of human experience and the intentions which lie behind actions. Thus the methods and methodology employed were designed to elicit responses from pre-determined questions (positivistic model) which allowed for non-directive responses (interpretive model). The aim of the methodology

was to grasp in the broadest possible terms the understanding, intentions and actions of teachers and students of what spirituality in schools means to them. As McNeill (1994, p.119) puts it, ‘our explanation has to take into account what the people involved feel and think about it. We must not regard them simply as helpless puppets’.

3.3.3 Critical Theory

Usher (1996, p.22) argues that ‘Critical Theory is “critical” in the sense that it challenges both the positivistic/empiricist and hermeneutic/interpretive traditions of social research – although it is fair to say that it is much more critical of the former than of the latter’. Critical theory, often associated with the pre-war Frankfurt School and the post-war figure of Jurgen Habermas (b.1929), is an approach to the understanding of knowledge, often with Marxist connotations. Thus, whilst it forms an intellectual judgement on systems of thought, it has practical, and some might say revolutionary, implications. As such it combines theory with praxis. Critical theory is more usually applied to politics and ideological systems such as capitalism and Marxism. This resonates with the writings of Freire (1972; 2004) who argued that liberation can be achieved through education and showed how free dialogue in educative settings is a means of empowerment for students. How might it apply to research into spirituality?

Habermas (1971) maintained that valid knowledge emerges from open, free and uninterrupted dialogue in a society which encourages and promotes free public debate. It is in this limited sense that critical theory may apply to research into perceptions of spirituality. Perceptions of spirituality are clearly linked to perceptions

of reality which involve questions of meaning and identity. The view that spirituality is intrinsic to the human condition and not the preserve of those of religious persuasions leads to an egalitarian system of spiritual development in schools. In a limited fashion it might be argued that we applied a form of Habermas's 'transcendental pragmatics' in encouraging participants to consider how 'spiritual' values (if these can be distinguished from straight-forward values) might achieve their fullest expression in both their lives and those of the children they taught. The research was intended to promote discussion on issues of concern to those engaged in education. Are teachers powerless in the face of legislation and government directives or are they the ones in power over the pupils they teach? Whose interests are being served by the continued requirement of teachers to promote and provide opportunities for the 'spiritual development' of pupils? Critical realism attempts to examine the legitimacy of these power groups and ensure there is both individual and social democracy. Our analysis of the findings, however, will veer towards the pragmatism of Rorty (1931-2007) (1979, 1982), a critic of Habermas, whereby the language of spirituality is seen more as a means of coping with life and enriching it than a self-evidential insight into reality, providing practical benefits rather than metaphysical insights. The latter, of course, may well have been the view of some of the respondents, but we shall adopt the maxim of Rorty published in his obituary in the *Daily Telegraph* (11th June 2007), who claimed 'each of us must reach our own conclusions about life, and try to respect the differences among us' especially in the absence of transcendent answers.

An objective overview, if possible, of the findings was the preferred option. One might argue whether such a position is possible, for the researcher is either an

‘insider’ or an ‘outsider’ as far as religion is concerned. This, however, is not necessarily the case with spirituality, especially if we define it as those experiences which give meaning and purpose to life and significantly contribute to the values we hold. None is immune to this. It has been suggested that the best position for the researcher into spirituality to hold is the one espoused by Renan (1908), namely someone who has formerly been religiously committed but then abandoned his beliefs, thus straddling the two worlds (Hay & Nye, 1998, p.81). It should be emphasised that in reality such desired neutrality is clearly illusory. Nevertheless the essence of this research was descriptive and interpretative rather than a judgement on the veracity of the responses received, even though a judgement may be made on the acceptability of such comments within the context of schools. One must remain conscious that we are exploring a value-laden topic. As such, an awareness of researcher bias in such a field as this is important, and a first step is to reflect upon this (Bradburn *et al.*, 2004, pp.47-67; Richards, 2006, p.25; Cohen *et al.*, 2007, pp.410-413). In order to minimise researcher bias and ensure honesty, authenticity and integrity in the selection and analysis of data it is best approached as Richards suggests (2006, p.27) not with an empty mind but with a deliberately open one. Whether or not the intention to adopt such an approach was successful or not may be decided by the reader after we have fully discussed the research methods adopted, especially questions of validity and reliability. As Brown and Dowling say (1998, p.45), ‘the ultimate responsibility for analysis lies with the researcher. In this sense, research is simply not a democratic activity’.

Whilst we will consider and touch upon certain aspects of these three principal approaches to educational inquiry the methods used will primarily tend to focus upon

the naturalistic approach and to a lesser extent the positivistic and scientific approach by means of a survey questionnaire supplemented with interviews. As Cohen *et al.* (2007, p.134) point out, research should not be ‘paradigm-bound’ for that ‘is a recipe for stagnation and conservatism’. In response to this the ‘mixed methods’ research approach has evolved within which the present research might be best said to lie:

Mixed methods research is a research design with philosophical assumptions as well as methods of inquiry. As a methodology, it involves philosophical assumptions that guide the direction of the collection and analysis of the data and the mixture of qualitative and quantitative approaches in many phases of the research process. As a method, it focuses on collecting, analysing, and mixing both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study or series of studies. Its central premise is that the use of quantitative and qualitative approaches in combination provides a better understanding of research problems than either approach alone (Creswell & Plano Clarke, 2006).

In selecting the most appropriate methods by which to collect data it was prudent to consider the methods employed by others in this field. Some of these general methods were adopted in this research, such as the use of questionnaire and interview, whilst others were explicitly rejected, such as the wording of the questions in the questionnaires which presented the respondents with a range of possible definitions and meanings for ‘spirituality’ and ‘spiritual development’.

3.4 Methodologies adopted by others researching spirituality.

In our literature review we identified Alister Hardy as being one of the pioneers who researched this area. His data was initially gathered through an appeal to the public to send him details of their religious/spiritual experiences. This in itself is a self selecting response group and the characteristics of people who respond to such appeals have been shown to be different from those who chose not to respond. They may be unrepresentative of the wider population thus introducing a possible unintentional bias

into the data collected (Brown & Dowling, 1998, pp.29, 68; Oppenheim, 2001, pp.38-42; Bradburn *et al.*, 2004 pp.47-67; Silverman, 2006; p.47). However, the question asked by Hardy has become something of a standard for determining the extent of spiritual experience. David Hay who came to collaborate with Hardy in his research used it as the principal question in his questionnaire given to one hundred of his students (Hardy, 1979, p.124; Hay 1979, see below for more detail). This question – *‘Do you feel that you have ever been aware of or influenced by a presence or a power, whether you call it God or not, which is different from your everyday self?’* – has been repeated by others researching in this field (Jackson, 1997, p.232; Watson, 2001, p.5). Hardy requested open-ended responses to his question and then set about categorising the replies he received. He was criticised for not using a questionnaire from the outset. He considered and rejected this tried and tested research method on the basis that ‘experiences are so precious and personal to the people who have them that many are likely to be put off by being asked to fill in such a form about them’ and ‘we must at all costs avoid damaging or distorting them by trying to trap them within an artificial framework’ (Hardy, 1979, p.21). Despite this early reluctance he did use the questionnaire in the second stage of his research. Hardy was primarily concerned with the classification of qualitative responses. In doing this he found that ‘very few of the accounts of experience could be put, as a whole, into just one particular classificatory compartment; so many of them were a mixture of widely different items’ (Hardy, 1979, p.23). He and his team eventually drew up a list of twelve main divisions, each of which was then subdivided. These were later modified and refined as the research project grew (Hardy, 1979, pp.25-30).

Hardy fully acknowledged that his early research study was qualitative rather than quantitative. What it failed to reveal was the ‘actual proportions of people in different populations who have such experiences, nor of those who deny ever having had anything of a remotely similar nature’ (Hardy, 1979, p.124). It was a research colleague of Hardy, David Hay, who set about redressing this omission. He first did this by sending out a questionnaire to students in the Department of Education at the University of Nottingham. The sample involved one hundred people (50 male and 50 female) drawn by a randomization procedure from the course membership. This was followed by the invitation to attend an interview. All but two of those who completed the questionnaire attended and two more names were selected at random to make up the numbers. The interview consisted of structured questions (Hardy, 1979, p.125; Hay, 1979, pp. 164-182). These methods, of questionnaire and interview, for collecting data have formed the basis for further research by others on the topic of spiritual experiences (Hay & Morisy, 1978; Hay & Nye, 1998; Gallup, 1982; Jackson, 1997; B.B.C., 2000; Gay, 2000; Watson, 2000; Elton-Chalcraft, 2001; McCreery, 2001; McNamara, 2001; Watson, 2001; Sunley, 2001; Avillez-Ataide, 2002; Rogers & Hill, 2002; Kay, 2005; Streib, 2005). In so doing both qualitative and quantitative data may be collected.

As we have stated, Hardy and Hay’s question - *‘Do you feel that you have ever been aware of or influenced by a presence or a power, whether you call it God or not, which is different from your everyday self?’* - has become something of a standard question to be included in questionnaires as a means of determining both the extent and the nature of spiritual experience as the corollary to this is usually a description of the experience which is then categorised by the researcher. The types of question asked on questionnaires are of course to a large extent determined by the kind of research being

undertaken and the research questions to which the researcher is hoping to find answers. An example of this extended investigation using questionnaires and interviews can be seen in the work of McCreery (2001) who wished to understand how teachers saw their role in children's spiritual development and sought to answer this through interviews and questionnaires, asking 162 primary teachers how they dealt with this aspect of their role. In a previous paper (McCreery, 1999) she used the issues raised in interviews on teachers' spirituality as the basis for questionnaires to be sent to schools. The interview material gathered by McCreery demonstrated that teachers used their religious background as a basis for understanding the spiritual. The subsequent questionnaire asked teachers their thoughts on the nature of the spiritual and how they understood it within an educational context (McCreery, 2001, p.9). The relationship between the spiritual experience of respondents and their attitudes towards spirituality and spiritual development in schools forms part of this research also.

Others have used similar research methods. In researching 'the role of the primary school teacher in nurturing the spirituality of children' McNamara (2001) used a questionnaire as her principal tool. This 'contained questions designed to examine the teachers' understanding of spirituality, their vision of education, their awareness of how children develop spiritually, how they see their role in fostering spirituality in the classroom, how their own spirituality impacts on the children they teach and how they nurture their own spirituality'. This is quite a list for a 'small piece of research to support' a Master's thesis. There was a confessional aspect to this research which was carried out in a North London Catholic primary school as the researcher used as her template for spirituality the characteristics of a Christian spirituality taken from Groome's *Educating for Life* (1998, p340):

Christian spirituality is consciously living one's life in relationship with God, empowered by the Holy Spirit and following the way of Jesus Christ. Allured by God's desire within human hearts, the Christian spiritual journey is into right relationship with God, self, others, and creation, permeated by justice and compassion. It is sustained by prayer – personal and communal – and lived through a Christian community for the coming of God's reign in the world.

The findings gathered from within a Catholic school and undertaken by a researcher who identified with a specifically religious interpretation of spirituality may well be prone to selection bias in favour of a view which extols the positive aspects of the spiritual nurturing of children. This, however, need not be the case with this methodological approach *per se* and the researcher needs to remain vigilant to the necessity for democratic and inclusive methods of participatory research. Given the personal and often strongly held views on spirituality 'care must be taken not to replace one set of dominant voices with another' (Gaventa & Cornwall, 2001, p.75) or to in any way pre-empt the responses sought. How these concerns are recognised and dealt with will be covered below. Suffice to say here that the full range of respondents was given the opportunity to comment and express their thoughts on the topic and both positive and negative comments have been acknowledge and included in the findings.

Given the contentious and ambiguous nature of 'spirituality' and 'spiritual development' researchers, such as Rogers and Hill (2002) have stipulated required reading before respondents complete questionnaires. The purpose of such an activity was to provide them (in this case trainee teachers) with basic background information about the topic and allow them time to reflect upon the ideas presented. 'It was felt that it was important to ensure they came to the class with at least some preparation in order for it to be more meaningful and instructive' (Rogers & Hill, 2002, p.279). Subsequent

to the required reading students completed a survey that contained ‘open-ended’ questions (though one may question how ‘open-ended’ a questions which assumes that all have some understanding of spirituality is) such as:

- *Spirituality is a notion of which we all have some understanding. However, we all express it differently and find different examples within our lives. Think of some situation or episode that you think has spiritual aspects in your own life (or someone you know well) and describe it.*
- *Explain what is spiritual about that situation.*

After completing the survey trainee teachers were invited to expand orally on what they had written.

Another instrument was constructed for the following year’s cohort of students which required them to select one of a pair of statements which best reflected their view on how science and technology should be taught to primary children. Of the pairs of statements one was taken from the then current Science and Technology syllabus while another was parallel but had a more spiritual overtone (Rogers & Hill, 2001, p.280).

One of the possible problems of using methods which specify required reading and then present students with an either/or response to statements is that of colouring, and to some extent manipulating (albeit unintentionally), the respondents’ thinking about these matters. A case in point is the small-scale research of Elton-Chalcraft (2001) whereby she presented ten teachers with the definitions of spirituality taken from the SCAA Discussion Paper: *Education for Adult Life: the Spiritual and Moral Development of Young People* (July, 1996a) which required a response on a five point Likert-type scale (Likert, 1932) ranging from ‘strongly disagree’ to ‘strongly agree’.

Her justification for categorising these different aspects of spirituality was based on similar methods being used in previous research (Fisher, 1999; Nye, 1998; Lealman, 1996; Armstrong, 1985). In addition to this she conducted semi-structured interviews. Before these took place respondents were asked to consider six questions, which would be later used as prompts during the interview, ranging from a definition of spirituality to the role of teachers and parents in developing children's spirituality and the resources/strategies which have proved to be useful. The problem with using a methodology which gives people definitions and then asks them essentially to agree or disagree with these statements is that to some extent it does the thinking for the respondents concerning the meaning of spirituality and possibly introduces them to definitions they might not have previously considered. This is not necessarily a bad thing and it could be argued that such a research tool actually encourages respondents to think about aspects of spirituality to which they have previously given little thought or not even considered. It is also condescending to assume that teachers are so easily influenced and not capable of forming their own judgements in response to these questions. Indeed, the table of responses gathered by Elton-Chalcraft does show a variation of views (see Fig.1), even though the majority of the small numbers surveyed tended to agree with the SCAA definitions.

Fig. 1: Teachers' responses to SCAA's definitions

Spirituality is:	strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	strongly agree
-the essence of being human, involving the ability to surpass the boundaries of the physical and material				7	3
- development of the inner life, insight and vision				3	7
- a response to God, the 'other' or the 'ultimate'		1	1	3	5

- an inclination to believe in ideals and possibilities that transcend our experience of the world			1	3	6
- a propensity to foster human attributes, such as love, faithfulness and goodness, that could not be classed as physical		2	1	1	6
- the inner world of creativity and imagination		1	1	5	3
- the quest for meaning in life, for truth and ultimate values				5	5
- the sense of identity and self-worth which enables us to value others		2		3	5

In his study of schizotypy and spiritual experience Jackson (1997) used two instruments with which to gather data. The first was a ‘spiritual experience questionnaire (SEQ)’ which yet again incorporated the widely used survey question – *‘Have you ever been aware of a presence or power, whether you call it God or not, which is different from your everyday self?’* – and five brief accounts of different forms of spiritual experience along with 43 items describing core phenomenological features of spiritual experience. The second was to measure schizotypy using the Claridge and Broks STQ (1984). It is the use of the questionnaire rather than the technical research instrument of the latter (containing the two scales – STA and STB – based on the DSM-III of the American Psychiatric Association 1980) which concerns us here. In the case of the former, respondents were asked to rate how well the core phenomenological features of spiritual experience applied to any experiences they have had. Examples of these core features are:

- Feeling that you were in the presence of a supernatural being, of source of power or energy.
- Having the impression that everything around you was alive and well.
- Feeling that you could see things in a completely new way.
- A feeling of sacredness or holiness.

Jackson used the phenomenological items to construct two scales measuring mystical and numinous forms of experience. 'Finally, five open-ended questions solicited freely written descriptions of spiritual experiences' (Jackson, 1997, p.232). On the basis of this information Jackson drew his conclusions which we have discussed in the literature review in chapter two.

Researchers in this field have therefore tended to use the questionnaire and the interview to gather both qualitative and quantitative information. Some have relied more heavily on one than the other and some have researched the topic using just the one method of gathering information. This lends support to the adoption here of a similar mixed methods approach. Watson, working with a small sample group of ten people, relied on semi-structured interviews on the basis that such small numbers allowed this method of qualitative research which 'is extremely time-consuming' (Watson, 2000, p.92). The interviews which took place in the interviewee's home or place of work or worship, each lasting about two hours, gave the interviewees 'the maximum opportunity to explore and develop their own ideas without prompting from the interviewer/researcher' (Watson, 2000, p.92). Watson's small scale study of the views of thirteen year 12 students relied solely on an interview lasting between forty-five minutes and an hour. Interviews were semi-structured inasmuch as Watson (2001, p.2) 'had areas of questioning which formed the skeleton of each interview' but 'otherwise the interview was *fairly* open, taking the form of a discussion'.

In the present research the principal tool for gathering information was the questionnaire supplemented with a small number of interviews in order to ensure an element of triangulation and clarify any possible ambiguities. Why were these methods

chosen? In answering this we need to remind ourselves once more of the main aim of this research. The principal aim was to discover what 'spirituality' and 'spiritual development' meant to teachers and prospective teachers and how far these meanings conformed to the 'official' guidance they are given. The essence of this guidance was to imbue spirituality with an 'inner' and 'outer' aspect and thus spiritual development meant encouraging pupils and providing opportunities for them to look within themselves and beyond the wonder and mysteries of the wider world. In addition to this there were supplementary, though not necessarily less noteworthy, questions to be asked and it is hoped answered. The research question self-evidently indicates that the target group to be adopted were teachers and students on teacher training courses. It is the nature of this target group which to a large extent determined the use of the questionnaire as the main source for gathering data.

The age group of those being investigated determines the methods used. Had schoolchildren been the key target group for this research other methods of gathering data or a significant modification of the methods employed here would need to be considered. Much depends on the age and ability of the respondents, for it may be safely assumed that young children will not be able to articulate their views and feelings in writing to the extent that may be expected of students on degree courses and qualified teachers. Thus Hay and Nye (1998) engaged children in conversations on a one-to-one basis while Erricker and his colleagues (1997) chose to speak to groups of children. This removes the problem which may be encountered by any lack of literacy skills on the part of the children. Nye who worked with young children facilitated the children's responses by inviting them to draw some aspect of their world that was important to them and to talk about sets of selected photographs (Hay & Nye, 1998,

pp.87-88). Others who have investigated the spirituality of childhood have encouraged children to give written responses to set open-ended questions such as ‘Once when I thought about God...’ (Klingberg, 1959) and ‘Have you ever had a particular experience when you felt especially close to God?’ (Elkind & Elkind, 1962) These were with upper junior age children and teenagers. If this age group was capable of giving sufficient written information for Klingberg and the Elkind to base their findings upon then *a fortiori* undergraduates and postgraduates on teacher training courses and qualified teachers, who are the target group, are both capable of and more likely than pupils to give full written responses on questionnaires. Based on a consideration of the research of others and the issues raised in the theoretical field of the literature review we now need to look at the methods used in undertaking this piece of research in the localised empirical field, the thinking behind the selection of these methods and success or otherwise of the information gathered in answering the original research questions.

3.5 Research methods used in this investigation

The primary methods of gathering information for this study were the use of the questionnaire which was supplemented by a small number of semi-structured interviews. To some extent we have shown how these two instruments of research have been used by others investigating this area and we shall see how aspects of their research have influenced the methods employed in this work.

3.5.1 Survey

The use of the survey, the methodological dominance of which was seen during the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s (Fontana & Frey, 2003, p.67), remains a useful tool in eliciting responses to the same questions from large numbers of people (Kane &

O'Reilly-De Brun, 2001, p.195). Surveys themselves can be applied in a variety of ways to achieve a variety of ends but at the heart of all surveys is standardisation, for as Sapsford (1999, p.5) says, the whole point is to get consistent answers to consistent questions. The essence of this research is descriptive and concerns what teachers and students have to say about spirituality and spiritual development. As such it is concerned with:

conditions or relationships that exist; practices that prevail; beliefs, points of view, or attitudes that are held; processes that are going on; effects that are being felt; or trends that are developing. At times descriptive research is concerned with how *what is* or *what exists* is related to some preceding event that has influenced or affected a present condition or event (Best, 1970, cited Cohen *et al.*, 2007, p.205)

Here Best (1970) encapsulates much of the purpose of this research inasmuch as we are investigating people's beliefs, experiences and practices; the impact of prior and current legislation and guidance on these practices and their understanding of 'spirituality' and 'spiritual development'; and the relationships or correlation between experience, beliefs and practices. In order that these outcomes are successfully achieved careful consideration needs to be given to the research techniques and tools used. A survey 'tells you what people say they do, think, or feel if you ask the right questions, if they understand what you are asking, and if they are able and prepared to give you answers' (Kane & O'Reilly-De Brun, 2001, p.199). There are, of course, limitations for what you get is a snapshot of views from a selected group at a point in time. Added to this the intention is to handle, reflect upon and interpret open-ended responses as qualitative data and this means it is important to design and test questions in order to acquire the necessary information from the outset. As Richards (2006, p.18) says, 'the requirement for consistency in a survey, for example, will mean that the researcher will be unable to return to redesign the questions'.

The two major forms of survey are: (i) the *descriptive* which aims to estimate the nature of existing conditions, and (ii) the *explanatory* which seeks to establish cause and effect relationships (Burns, 2000, p.566). Both types of question are incorporated in this study and the reliability and validity of the eventual findings depend on the representative nature of the sampling and variables as well as the fitness for purpose of the questions asked. In the spirit of mixed methods research the intention was to gather both standardised qualitative and quantitative information and from this to observe patterns and make generalisations. This would mean large scale data-gathering from the target population in order for these generalisations to have any credence and to have confidence in the findings. The chief tool for this was the self-completion questionnaire.

Two questionnaires, one for students and one for teachers, constituted the primary source of data from which conclusions were drawn. We now need to consider the rationale behind the questions asked; the structure of the questionnaires and the way in which the sample population was selected and the questionnaire administered in order to ensure that the responses yielded the information with which to address the research aims and research questions.

3.5.2. Questionnaires and questionnaire design

The advantages of the use of questionnaires are clearly outlined in books on research methodology, along with the pitfalls and disadvantages (Anderson, 1993, pp.207-221; Elliot, 1993, pp.62-64; McNeill, 1994, pp.25-35; Scott & Usher, 1996, pp.61-62; Bell, 1997, pp.75-90; Burns, 2000, pp.581-582; Kane & O'Reilly-De Brun,

2001, pp.196-219; Oppenheim, 2001, pp.100-149; Bulmer, 2004; Walliman, 2001, pp.236-238; Cohen *et al.*, 2007, pp.92-94).

The advantages include:

- the efficient use of time (and cost) given that large numbers can be targeted with standardised questions;
- the guaranteed confidentiality and impersonal nature which allows respondents to make truthful responses; and
- depending on the circumstances under which it is administered the freedom of the respondent to answer in their own time and at their own pace.

The disadvantages include:

- the difficulty in securing an adequate response;
- the likelihood of bias as those who choose to respond may differ in their views and perspectives on the topic from those who choose not to complete the questionnaire, thus causing sampling problems;
- the possibility of misunderstanding and misinterpretation of the questions and the lack of flexibility and free expression with closed questions along with the difficulty of systematically analysing responses to open-ended questions; and
- the reliance on questionnaires alone, which provides no opportunity for the researcher to probe and follow up matters which may come to light when scrutinising the questionnaires.

In her research into the perspectives of early childhood educators on the spiritual growth of children, Avillez-Ataide (2002, p.3) drew up a questionnaire in accordance with the following strategy:

- Base questions in educators' daily activity, using their current language.

- Avoid incisive questions that might induce pre-determined answers.
- Obtain a certain number of answers that could be counted.
- Include open ended questions so that subjects could express their thoughts/feelings on the theme quite freely.
- Include space for comments in the majority of questions.
- Balance questions directly linked with the problems with others acting as a backcloth.

Taking note of the above comments it was important that the noted strengths of the use of questionnaires were utilised whilst the disadvantages were minimised. It was essential to construct self-completion questionnaires which would provide both quantitative and qualitative data with a mixture of unambiguous closed and open-ended questions. Care was taken to avoid leading questions or questions using technical or inaccessible language (Cohen *et al.*, 2007, p.320). Questionnaires were constructed (see appendices) which in some instances only required a box to be ticked whilst others allowed the respondent to consider his/her own thoughts on the issues raised and provided sufficient space for these to be written at length on the questionnaires. The inclusion of open-ended questions on a self-completion questionnaire is best avoided according to Cohen *et al.* (2007, pp.320-322) for such questions may result in responses which are less than clear and do not permit further probing to elicit the required information. Added to this such questions are too demanding of respondents' time. The researcher considered, however, that open-ended questions were essential in this research instrument as a means of gathering both quantitative and, above all, qualitative data. The returned and completed questionnaires needed to provide sufficient

qualitative information to make an informed judgement on the research questions asked (Patton, 2002, pp.353-354).

Oppenheim (2001, p.47) reminds us that questionnaires ‘do not emerge fully-fledged’ and whilst questions can be adapted and even borrowed from the work of others it is prudent to pilot a questionnaire to eliminate any potential problems with clarity and design. This can extend from the colour of the paper used to the more obvious problems associated with the type of question asked. It was imperative that the pilot study was carried out with a sample which matched the profile of the population for the main study (Brown & Dowling, 1998, p.67). A first draft of the questionnaire was constructed and duly piloted with a randomly selected group comprised of two students (one undergraduate and one postgraduate), two teachers (one primary and one secondary), one lecturer of ITET courses and my Director of Studies. The purpose of this pilot study was to obtain feedback on the clarity of the questions asked, the ease of completion and the overall layout of the questionnaire such as the sections and ordering of the questions. Comments were favourable and the only subsequent change to the original questionnaires was the insertion of a question which asked the respondents for the type of school they attended as pupils and/or taught at as teachers. The reason for this was to see if those who either had attended or currently taught at a faith school had a markedly different experience and perception of spirituality and spiritual development from those from/in non-faith schools. Four students (two undergraduates and two postgraduates) and four teachers (two primary and two secondary), using convenience selection procedures, agreed when asked to complete the redrafted questionnaires. The information provided on the questionnaires collected revealed that respondents were more than willing to share their thoughts on the questions asked with many doing so at

length, thus providing useful feedback. Given the target group of students and teachers this was anticipated but remained an area of uncertainty until the questionnaires were returned and scrutinised.

In all, two questionnaires were prepared and distributed – one for students and one for teachers. The questions asked were determined by the research aims, namely to discover what ‘spirituality’ and ‘spiritual development’ mean to teachers and prospective teachers and how far these meanings conform to the ‘official’ guidance they are given. How do they interpret and to what extent do they implement their professional responsibilities in this area? In addition to this principal aim the research endeavoured to answer questions related to this. Examples are:

- Is there a correlation between students’ and teachers’ own ‘spiritual experiences’ and the way they perceive their role as catalysts in the spiritual development of those in their charge?
- Do these views vary according to gender, length of service, the age phase in which they teach or train, and subject specialism?

As the problem of definition formed the main focus of the ongoing research project, key questions were designed to elicit qualitative definitions of ‘spirituality’ and ‘spiritual development’ from the target population. An open-ended question common to both questionnaires was: ‘*What do Spirituality and Spiritual Development of Pupils mean to you?*’ (Question 9 – student questionnaire; question 12 – teacher questionnaire).

Questions were also put to discover if teachers and students considered it to be part of their professional responsibilities to provide opportunities for the ‘spiritual development’ of pupils and, perhaps more importantly, whether they actually did plan for these opportunities to be provided. These questions (Questions 5 and 6 – student questionnaire; questions 8 and 9 – teacher questionnaire): *‘Do you consider it to be part of your role to foster the spiritual development of pupils?’* and *‘Do you consciously **plan** for opportunities for pupils to experience **spiritual development** in school in your lesson plans?’* - could be answered by indicating which of the forced-choice boxes – **Yes/No/Unsure** – best represented their answer. These were not the only questions which used forced-choice boxes. As we shall see, answers to such questions have the benefit of being easily processed and counted (Kane & O’Reilly-De Brun, 2001, p.210). The important thing was to ensure that the choices provided covered most if not all of the possibilities. It was for this reason **‘Other (please specify)’** was added to the range of possible answers for other forced-choice boxes on the questionnaires (questions 2, 3, 8 and 13 – student questionnaire; questions 2, 4, 7 and 11 – teacher questionnaire).

In constructing the questionnaire careful consideration was given to the questions asked and it was a deliberate decision not to use the standard question used by others researching this field, namely - *‘Do you feel that you have ever been aware of or influenced by a presence or a power, whether you call it God or not, which is different from your everyday self?’* - or to provide respondents with a range of suggested definitions and interpretation of ‘spirituality’, ‘spiritual development’ and ‘spiritual experiences’. It was interesting to note in chapter two that the 30-40 per cent of the population who claim such an experience rises to 60-70 per cent when more ‘sensitive’

research methods are used (Jackson, 1997). It could be argued that the question asked in this research questionnaire, namely, '*Have you ever had what you would class as a spiritual experience?*' (question 11 – student questionnaire; question 14 – teacher questionnaire) – is the wrong question, being too open-ended. It might have been better, on personal reflection, had those questioned been asked 'if they considered themselves to be spiritual people.' or even whether or not they had encountered a range of experiences that might be regarded as spiritual. Regarding the former, this question may well have resulted in a more positive response, but then so would the question, 'Are you a reasonably nice person?' as many like to attribute to themselves what are considered to be positive and sensitive characteristics of human nature. The intention of the open-ended question was for respondents to determine whether they regarded their experiences as 'spiritual' or not without guiding them towards a predetermined answer. Problems can be identified in previous surveys which have incorporated researchers' own definitions of the term 'spiritual' into the questions, the most notable being, as stated above, where people are asked to say if they have, or have not, been aware of, or influenced by a presence or 'power', whether referred to as God or not, which is different from their everyday lives (Hardy, 1997; Hay, 1978; Jackson, 1997; Watson, 2001). There is an inherent danger in this approach that the researcher comes armed with a predetermined definition of spirituality, namely being aware of or influenced by a presence or 'power', and then proceeds to call spiritual that which the recipient of the experience would not and even vice versa. This is akin to the experience of prominent humanist and atheist Jonathon Miller who was told he really was religious but hadn't fully realised or acknowledged it when he expressed a sense of wonder at the intricacies and beauty of the natural world he was so interested in. As he said, he resented this kind of 'creeping Christianity' delivered by 'the clergyman hiding in the bushes' that may be

applied to all and sundry for, he adds, 'I think most people, unless they're really very oafish clods, find there is something deeply mysterious and mind-stopping, and in some ways thought-stopping, about the business of being alive at all' (Miller, 2001; Mooney, 2003). To provide respondents with pre-coded suggestions of the incidence and types of spiritual experience ranging from the highest to lowest frequencies and/or from relatively mild experiences to the more extreme may result in its being easier to process the information but is not a guarantee of improved validity and reliability. It has been shown that respondents often avoid extreme response categories and pre-coded lists run the danger of missing out more extreme responses (Sudman & Bradburn, 1982; Lee, 2004, p.71).

If respondents indicated that they had what they would class as a 'spiritual experience' they were requested to share this with the researcher on the questionnaire (question 12 – student questionnaire; question 14 – teacher questionnaire). The intention was not only to note if there was any correlation between the experiences of the respondents and their views on their professional responsibility to provide opportunities for the spiritual development of pupils but to categorise the experiences they deemed to be 'spiritual' that they were prepared to share with the researcher. As the survey wished to consider the effectiveness of spiritual development in schools, students, most of whom who were not far removed from their own schooling, were asked if the experiences they classed as spiritual had occurred in school time or were the result of something that had happened in school (question 12 – student questionnaire). This was intended to link with question 13 on the student questionnaire which presented students with a list of subjects and aspects of school life which they though had helped, hindered or neither helped nor hindered their own spiritual

development. The intention was to see if certain subjects or aspects of school life stood out as positive or negative factors in the perceived spiritual development of the respondents.

It might also be argued that the question: *What do **Spirituality** and **Spiritual Development** of pupils mean to you?* is somewhat ambiguous as the meaning of the word ‘mean’ is not fully clarified on the questionnaire. Does it refer to the professional meanings ascribed to the terms or the religious or the personal? The exploration of what we mean by ‘mean’ or ‘meaning’ is a paper in itself which would embrace the work of Frege, Weber, Krippe, Grice, Wittgenstein and many others along with action theory, empathy, hermeneutics, linguistics and the like. Suffice to say that in the context of this research Wittgenstein’s slogan that ‘the meaning of a word is its use in language’ formed the basis of the thinking behind the composition of the question. Whilst words and their meanings have rule governed use in language, these uses are multifarious. We have seen in chapter two how this is the case with words such as ‘spiritual’ and ‘spirituality’ and the intention of this question was to discover how each respondent interpreted the word for themselves. What, in other words, was the established use of the terms for them?

A method which first presents respondents with a range of possible definitions and interpretations on a Likert-type scale (Elton-Chalcraft, 2001) is that it runs the risk of influencing and prejudicing their replies. Such a method unintentionally assists those making the response with clarifying any possible confusion they may have over their own understanding of ‘spirituality’ and ‘spiritual development’ and even planting within their consciousness a definition they may not have thought of. The aim of this

research was to encourage respondents to consider and express their own honest opinion on these less than clear areas. This does not mean that we should necessarily accept the premise that because an experience has meaning for the individual, it must automatically be right. But neither must we subscribe to the view that unless it corresponds to predetermined definitions it cannot be spiritual. The intention was to know what each person thought and proceed from that point. A question which was intended to throw additional light on the responses received and enhance our comprehension of respondents' understanding of what is meant by a 'spiritual' person, was that which asked if a person can be spiritual without being religious (question 10 – student questionnaire; question 13 – teacher questionnaire). This was to determine if a secular spirituality, discussed in chapter two, is a coherent and commonly accepted concept. As with other questions respondents were given the space on the questionnaire to expand upon their 'tick-box' response if they wished to do so, thus adding qualitative to quantitative data.

The instances where it was considered prudent to offer suggestions on the questionnaire were to provide possible reasons why teachers and students did not fulfil their statutory requirement in planning for opportunities for the spiritual development of pupils to take place (question 8 – student questionnaire; question 11 – teacher questionnaire) and as we have already mentioned, the list of subjects and aspects of school life which in their view had either helped or hindered their own spiritual development (question 13 – student questionnaire). This was useful for statistical analysis of which were the most common subjects and aspects of school life students considered to have a positive, detrimental or neutral influence on their own spiritual

development. At the same time space was provided, thus allowing respondents to add their own reasons and thoughts on the questions asked.

Other questions which were designed to contribute to the quantitative information/data gathered were those providing carefully selected alternatives for respondents to choose from (pre-coded responses) combining nominal data on participants' backgrounds and relevant personal details (Cohen *et al.*, 2007, p.207). Some of these were classification questions of a factual nature and were important in stratifying the sample (Oppenheim, 2001, p.132). Common to both questionnaires were questions on gender (question 1- student and teacher questionnaires), religious beliefs (question 3 – student questionnaire; question 4 – teacher questionnaire) and the subjects they specialised in (question 4 – student questionnaire; question 5 – teacher questionnaire). Students were also asked to indicate their route into teaching (question 2) to determine if they were undergraduate or postgraduate students. Teachers were asked the number of years in teaching (question 2), their roles and responsibilities in their place of work (question 3) and the year groups they taught (question 6). Responses to these questions assisted in answering some of the original research questions which wished to discover if views varied according to gender, length of service, the age phase in which they taught or trained, and subject specialism.

In order to provide further opportunities for respondents to offer their own views on the topic which were not tied into the subject matter and thus provide additional qualitative information, there was a final open-ended question in both questionnaires calling for any further information which they might consider relevant.

The last section of the questionnaires was a request to give contact details if they were prepared to follow up the questionnaire with a confidential interview.

3.5.3 Interviews

In addition to the data collected from the questionnaires, five students and three teachers were interviewed. Using interviews as a complementary technique to obtain the same and/or similar information also ensured methodological triangulation. The research interview has been defined as ‘a two-person conversation initiated by the interviewer for the specific purpose of obtaining research-relevant information, and focused by him on content specified by research objectives of systematic description, prediction, or explanation’ (Cannell & Kahn, 1968, cited Cohen *et al.*, 2007, p.351). This seemingly straightforward method of eliciting information is not without its own pitfalls. These include the time-consuming and possibly inconvenient nature of the interview, the danger of interviewer bias and issues of anonymity (Cohen *et al.*, 2007, p.349). Despite these concerns this ‘intersubjective’ (Laing, 1967, p.66) method is capable of providing a rich source of data and is considered by some as ‘one of the most common and powerful ways in which we try to understand our fellow human beings’ (Fontana & Frey, 2003, pp.61-62). Not all agree with the position that interviews need be time consuming but rather see it as a method which is economical in terms of time and resources (Silverman, 2006, p.113). It allows the researcher to explore further complex issues and through personal engagement, seek clarification by probing and prompting (Brown & Dowling, 1998, p.72). Different researchers vary in the number of types of interview which can take place ranging from four to eleven, from the standardized to the focus group (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; LeCompte & Preissle, 1993; Oppenheim, 2001. Patton, 2002). It can range from

the strictly controlled and structured to the spontaneous and conversational with, what is often referred to as the semi-structured, falling somewhere in between. Noakes and Wincup (2004, p.80) have listed the characteristics of the three basic interview formats and show how the open-ended interview is the preferred choice if the objective is to obtain 'rich data' by allowing 'the interviewee the freedom to talk and ascribe meanings.' The term 'open-ended' is to be preferred to 'unstructured' which implies that there can be interviews without any structure. This, as Brown and Dowling (1998, pp.72-73) demonstrate, is something of a fallacy for the interviewer will always bring some agenda or purpose to bear on the activity and impose some theoretical and/or methodological selection. Even the conversational interview has a specific purpose which distinguishes it from everyday conversation (Dyer, 1995, pp.56-58; Oppenheim, 2001, pp.65-66).

The selection of the eight people interviewed was based on an indication on the returned questionnaires of their willingness to take part in an interview along with the nature of the responses they made on their questionnaires which were deemed to be either representative or different. In other words, some had undergone an experience I needed to understand and some people represented a good example of the patterns I had found (Kane & O'Reilly-De Brun, 2001, p.265). The main purpose, however, was to further identify key issues, regardless of convergence. The first interview took place in 2002 and the last in 2005. The interviews were conducted either in my office or a nearby teaching room which was convenient for both parties. Whilst the interviewees were not offered a choice of location there was no discernable inhibiting effect on them as a result. As Brown and Dowling (1998, p.74) point out, there are no neutral locations or hard and fast rules for determining the effects of location. The important detail is to

make those being interviewed feel at ease both before and during the interview despite any authority relations (lecturer/student) which might exist. With the agreement of the participants all but one of the interviews was recorded using an audio-cassette (the grounds-person mowing the grass outside the window where the interview was taking place prevented the tape recording in this one instance) and extensive notes were taken during the interviews. Whilst note taking may inhibit the fluency of the interview it does have the advantage that the information is recorded at the time and it was not felt to curtail the flow of the interviews which took place. These notes were read out and/or shown to the interviewees during and after the interview to ensure there was no misrepresentation of what had been said and later checked against the tape recordings for accuracy. Tapes and notes were also shared with my Director of Studies to confirm the notes truthfully verified what had been said during the interviews. This means of confirming the accuracy of the data obviated the time consuming need for transcriptions (Walford, 2001, p.92).

Interviews are a means of redressing a criticism levelled at self-administered questionnaires in that the latter present problems to people of limited literacy and, even though open-ended items are used, respondents may either be reluctant to write their answers or do so hurriedly (Cohen *et al.*, 2007, p.352). This was not found to be the case with the questionnaires collected given the literate nature of the target population. Because of the often full and detailed comments on the questionnaires the interviews added little to the information retrieved from these and this was the reason for the small numbers interviewed. Primarily the interviews merely confirmed the data on the questionnaires and, to some extent, expanded upon the experiences of the respondents. The fact that those interviewed articulated similar issues did assist in confirming the

important elements identified in the questionnaire returns. The interviews were semi-structured and involved an expansion and clarification of the comments found on the questionnaires (Kerlinger, 1986). At times the interview proceeded along a non-standard format because of unexpected or interesting comments. Interviews started by going over some of the responses the interviewees had given on their questionnaire and sharing some of the findings which had emerged from the theoretical and local fields. As the rapport between interviewer and interviewee developed, issues of a more personal and/or sensitive nature were explored, such as their spiritual experiences. The interviews lasted between 45 and 90 minutes with the majority lasting just over an hour. Once more, confidentiality was assured and interviewees told that they were not obliged to disclose anything they did not wish to, given the personal and often sensitive nature of spiritual experiences. It was important to be aware that the views and opinions of the interviewer did not determine the views and opinions of the interviewee. What was required was for interviewees to express their views freely and not say what they thought the researcher wanted to hear. The purpose was to acquire 'unique, non-standardized, personalized information about individuals' view of the world' and for this reason the interviews veered towards 'qualitative, open-ended, unstructured interviewing' (Cohen *et al.*, 2007, p.354). It is considered that this was achieved with the interviews helping to address the research topic (Silverman, 2003, p.347).

Whilst, as has been stated, the interviews did not disclose anything which called into question the information collected from the questionnaires (perhaps it could be argued that further interviews and a more probing interview technique might have done so – though I am not so sure this is the case) it ensured a degree of triangulation whereby at least two methods of gathering data were used. Time triangulation was also

used as the same research was conducted at different times (2001-2005). In addition to this the use of interviews to supplement the information gathered from questionnaires addressed matters of validity and reliability.

3.6. Research sample

Once the central aim of the research had been decided and the subsidiary questions associated with this, along with the methods to be used in gathering information, there was the question of the specification of the population to which the enquiry was addressed. In this survey the specified population consisted of qualified teachers and students training to become teachers. Given the restriction of time and cost, it was necessary to select a representative sample of these population groups. A sample is a subset of the population with the implication that the subset resembles the population closely on key characteristics. 'The key word in the sample population is representativeness' and the selected sample 'must be representative in terms of those variables which are known to be related to the characteristics we wish to study' (Burns2000, p.83). If this is the case then what is true of the sample will also be true of the larger population group (Sapsford, 1999, p.6). The selection of the sample therefore should produce as good as possible a representation of the target population, for as Brown and Dowling (1998, p.29) point out, 'attention to the sampling procedures is a necessary prerequisite to establishing or questioning the validity of claims which generalize beyond the sample itself'. As with questionnaires and interviews there are various types of sampling which might be employed. For the purposes of this research a mixture of cluster, opportunity, random, convenience and snowball sampling were used. The aforementioned types of sampling might be briefly described as follows: with cluster sampling a random segment sharing the same or similar characteristics of a much larger group is selected. Opportunity sampling is based on the goodwill and

availability of subjects. Random sampling is similar to cluster sampling whereby a population with similar characteristics is selected at random. Convenience sampling is based on the ease of data gathering from a readily available group. Snowball sampling is when individuals identify and include others in the sample being researched. The distinction between probability and non-probability sampling whereby the former is random and the latter purposive is somewhat of a manufactured dichotomy in this research. Whilst groups of students and teachers were randomly selected based on opportunity and convenience, they still constituted a purposive sample upon whose responses generalisation might be made. Cluster sampling involved selecting groups within the cohort of students on the basis that variations among the groups was small (Anderson, 1993, p.199). Burns (2000, p.85) cautions that the danger of making do with whatever subjects researchers can gain access to often means that 'generalisations from such samples are not valid and the results only relate to the subjects from which they derive'. In other words, mathematical efficiency may be sacrificed to the obvious advantage of ease of administration (Anderson, 1993, p.199). This need not necessarily be the case and much depends on the composition and size of the sample and how far the localised setting might be regarded as typical of others in the field.

Access to the target population was a key issue in this research and not only needed to be permitted but also practicable (Cohen *et al.*, 2007, p.109). As both groups, teachers and students training to become teachers, were present at *Metropolitan University* this meant that they were relatively easy to approach and survey. The ready access to both these groups played a significant part in the matter of survey sampling. The information collected was intended to be representative of these population groups as a whole and as previously stated the sample surveyed was based upon a combination

of cluster sampling, random sampling, opportunity or convenience sampling and snowball sampling. This was considered to be an appropriate technique to ensure that the sample was representative of the population and as far as possible not biased in any way (Cohen *et al.*, 2007, p.83). A criticism often levelled at opportunity sampling is the likelihood of bias and therefore the greater likelihood of error (Burns, 2000, p.93). The survey which was wide-ranging in terms of size and covered similarities and differences in terms of, for example, gender, subject specialisms and age phase training or teaching addressed some of these concerns. *Metropolitan University* offers a range of teacher training courses which for the purpose of this research included the four year (now discontinued) and the three year undergraduate BA in primary education; postgraduate (primary and secondary) and four year undergraduate BA (Ed) in secondary drama. The Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Master's programme also offered by *Metropolitan University* and which recruits large numbers of teachers working in both primary and secondary schools, provided easy access to this group. Questionnaires were given to random samples of students on the undergraduate courses (years 1, 2, 3 and 4) and those on postgraduate courses. Apart from those on the secondary drama course students were grouped to ensure a mix of subject specialisms. For example in educational and professional studies (EPS, later changed to 'initial professional development' – IPD) classes on the postgraduate secondary course students are grouped to ensure a representative selection of subject specialisms. Students could opt for Welsh medium groups which also included students specialising in Welsh language teaching. Teachers, with varying lengths of teaching experience, on the three year CPD Master's programme were grouped in the first year of the programme according to age phase taught (primary or secondary). Whilst it may be acknowledged that students and teachers primarily selected from one Higher Education

(HE) training institution are not necessarily truly representative of the total teacher and teacher training student population, it is fair to conclude that *Metropolitan University*, as one of the major teacher training institutions in Wales with a well established CPD Master's programme which recruits large numbers of teachers from the surrounding area, does contain diverse representative groups (in terms of gender and age, geographical location, subject specialism, selected age phase, and role in school).

When addressing the question of sample size 'there is, of course, no clear-cut answer, for the correct sample size depends upon the purpose of the study and the nature of the population under scrutiny' (Cohen *et al.*, 2007, p.101). Cohen *et al.* suggest that a sample size of thirty is considered a minimum for work intended to produce statistically relevant results, though they would advise a sample size of considerably more, and as this survey wished to explore the relationships between different groups such as the age phase taught and the subject specialisms followed by the respondents, a much larger number was required. For, as Burns (2000, p.83) says, 'usually, the smaller the sample, the lower the accuracy' He qualifies this however by pointing out that size is less important than representativeness. The original intention was to have at least 200 questionnaires as a basis from which to work, for, as Anderson (1993, p.201) says, 'in general, the major gains in precision are made steadily as sample sizes increase to one hundred and fifty or two hundred after which gains in precision are much more modest'. As it turned out considerably more questionnaires were collected and recorded on a database (Microsoft Access, see section 3.9). Insofar as the data was collected on an ongoing basis it corresponded to the theoretical sampling of grounded theory. Where it failed to match the methodology of this approach was its non-iterative nature and having a theoretical saturation point. In other words a degree of

repetition and similarity in the responses allowed for the formation of categories but the possibility of new insights given an even larger sample might lead to the formation of further categories.

The principal research instruments of questionnaires and interviews were employed during the academic years 2001-2005 (last batch of questionnaires collected 2004; last interview June, 2005). Even though this study was conducted over a number of years it was not strictly speaking a longitudinal study, even though it bears some of the hallmarks of such a survey, as it was not the intention to track the development of perceptions of the same students and teachers over a specified period of time. Rather it was a cross-sectional survey intended to produce a 'snapshot' (albeit over five years) of the perceptions of a representative sample of the target population. In total four hundred and twenty eight questionnaires were returned by students (68 per cent return) of which one hundred and seventeen were from students on undergraduate courses and three hundred and eleven from postgraduate students. All courses were in initial teacher training and education, primarily at *Metropolitan University*. Twenty-nine of these questionnaires were completed by students on the religious education Post Graduate Certificate of Education (PGCE) secondary course at *County Town University* as there were no students specialising in secondary RE at *Metropolitan University*. Questionnaires were completed during seminar sessions and administered by the tutors of those sessions. These students were pursuing a range of subject specialisms at both the primary and the secondary level. In addition, seventy-six experienced teachers (fifty-nine secondary and sixteen primary, along with one who did not indicate the age phase taught) responded to questionnaires (51 per cent return – this is approximate as the number handed out by snowball sampling is an estimate). Fifty were given out

during classes conducted within the MA (Ed) course (though some chose to complete these at home) with the remaining twenty-six from teachers who were asked to complete the questionnaire by their colleagues (snowball sampling) on the MA (Ed) course. Questionnaire responses were entered by the researcher on to a database using Microsoft Access (see section 3.9). Despite the time-consuming nature of this exercise it was to prove useful in both checking and absorbing the responses and later making connections and producing quantitative statistics.

3.7 Research ethics

Given that the target groups were somewhat of a captive audience the questions of voluntary participation in the research and research ethics arose. The ethical concerns in this instance applied not only to the methods and procedures employed but also the subject matter itself. Participants were being asked to divulge personal information about their experiences which might be emotionally painful and not necessarily uplifting. Added to this they were asked to comment on their own practices in an educational setting which some might regard as an admission of negligence given the statutory requirements to provide opportunities for the spiritual development of pupils. In order to overcome this it was stressed orally to all who received a questionnaire that confidentiality and privacy were assured and completion of the questionnaire was purely voluntary with absolutely no adverse effect on their marks, reports or references. They were also informed of the nature of the research being undertaken. All who responded did so with informed consent. Having said this, one must acknowledge that lecturers are in a position of power over students and even teachers on the MA course, so 'their request for volunteers' as Burns (2000, p.19) argues, 'from a unit they are teaching is implicitly a demand'. As such it remained a

possibility that there were some who completed the questionnaires reluctantly, feeling obliged to do so.

As stated above (3.3.3 *Interviews*) all those interviewed had indicated their agreement on the section of the questionnaires asking for contact details of those who were willing to partake in a follow up interview. Confidentiality was assured and interviewees told that they were not obliged to disclose anything they did not wish to, given the personal and often sensitive nature of spiritual experiences.

Note has been taken of British Educational Research Association's (BERA) *Revised Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research* (2004) and *Good Practice in Educational Research Writing* (2000) and it is considered that the advice given in these publications has been complied with.

All were informed that the anonymous collated information stemming from the questionnaires and interviews may be used for journal articles and conference presentations in addition to the stated purpose of the research.

3.8. Validity and reliability

If the research instrument measures what it purports to measure then it has what is termed 'validity'. According to Silverman (2006, p.47) it is another word for 'truth'. Where quantitative research is concerned this is achieved through careful sampling and a suitable methodology and in qualitative research through 'depth and scope of data, lack of bias and triangulation' (Geen *et al.*, 2007, p.191). These have been covered to some extent in the preceding sections. The validity of a piece of research will always be

a matter of degree rather than an absolute state (Gronlund, 1981) and the best a researcher can do is to minimize the invalidity and maximize the validity (Cohen *et al.*, 2007, p.133).

This research leans more towards the qualitative than the quantitative with its search for insight into students' and teachers' perceptions of 'spirituality' and 'spiritual development'. As such, it has been argued that positivist notions of validity need to be replaced with notions of 'authenticity' (Guba & Lincoln, 1989) and 'understanding' (Mishler, 1990; Maxwell, 1992). In order to achieve this understanding the researcher's job is to uncover people's perspectives, regarding all as equally valid. 'Validity, then, attaches to accounts, not to data or methods' (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983, cited Cohen *et al.*, 2007, p.134). According to Shadish (1995, p.421) validity is a property of knowledge, not methods. Not all consider this as sufficiently rigorous to ensure the validity and reliability of a piece of research (Silverman, 2006, p.292). Indeed, Silverman (p.48) points out that most research is seldom exclusively qualitative or exclusively quantitative, as is the case here, where simple quantitative tabulations have been used as a means of achieving greater validity to the qualitative study of the nature of students' and teachers' perceptions. The findings (chapter four) present a summary of the relations between these indicator variables (findings) and concept variables (problem). It is this link between the theoretical problem and the empirical findings that address matters of validity (Brown & Dowling, 1998, p.143).

The problem with volunteers is that they are not likely to be a random sample, and this has negative implications for the validity of the subsequent analysis and findings. Given, however, that the majority of students and teachers asked to complete

the questionnaire did so voluntarily and a diversity of responses was collected, it appears that a good cross-section of views and opinions was represented. A range of independent variables such as religious persuasion, spiritual experience, subject specialism, and specialist age phase, was identified and recorded on the questionnaires. Their correlation to the dependent variable, namely their views and understanding of 'spirituality' and 'spiritual development', are discussed in the next chapter. Of key importance was that the data selected to be presented in the next chapter constituted a true representative of the whole sample and data set and met most of the criteria for validity in qualitative research set out by Maxwell (1992, pp.50-51). In order to show an understanding is valid Maxwell identifies five kinds of validity: descriptive, interpretive, theoretical, generalizability and evaluative (Maxwell, 1992, cited Cohen *et al.*, 2007, p.135). It is hoped that the next chapter will demonstrate that these types of validity have been applied to the data collected. The presentation of data is intended to be a factually accurate summary of information (descriptive validity); it interprets the meanings recorded by students and teachers (interpretative validity); the research considers the theoretical field and applies these to the constructs of the participants (theoretical validity); it makes generalisations for the groups studied and applies this to wider communities and thus the current legislative situation (generalizability); and the research findings move beyond the merely descriptive to make an evaluation and judgement (evaluative validity).

Both internal and external validity were addressed. The data collected form the basis and evidence for the findings. The recording and reporting of these are in line with the suggestions of LeCompte and Preissle (1993) that they are fair and balanced in that they take account of the multiple views collected and they have an educative

authenticity in attempting to throw additional light on the topic. Whether the findings possess the catalytic authenticity (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993) which results in a specific course of action remains to be seen. The external validity is somewhat more contentious as it is risky to transfer the findings of this research to the wider population of students training to be teachers and teachers across England and Wales, even though the target group researched inevitably mirrors to some extent this wider population. Whilst it is hoped that tentative generalisations can be made from the findings, the comment of Lincoln and Guba (1985, p.316) should be noted, that all researchers should do is provide sufficiently rich data for their readers to determine whether transferability is possible.

The content validity of the research has been covered in the section on sampling and the construct validity in the section on questionnaires and interviews. It is perhaps pertinent to remind ourselves that the categories used by the researcher were deliberately open-ended and not explained to the participants. This is not the same as suggesting that they were not meaningful to the participants (Eisenhart & Howe, 1992, p.648). It was for the respondents to interpret and determine for themselves the meaning of 'spirituality', 'spiritual development' and a 'spiritual experience'.

According to Richards (2006, p.141) 'reliability' like 'validity' is more approachable via its verb. Reliability is usually taken to refer to 'dependability, consistence and replicability over time' (Cohen *et al.*, 2007, p.146). It is 'the repeatability of the process' (Brown & Dowling, 1998, p.143). Reliability, however, when applied to qualitative research is a term some consider inappropriate. Lincoln and Guba (1985) would, for example, substitute terms such as 'credibility', 'neutrality',

dependability', consistency', 'applicability' and 'trustworthiness' in place of 'reliability' (Cohen *et al.*, 2007, p.148). The reason behind these suggestions is that qualitative research is about interpretation. Here the interpretations of the responses collected were assigned categories by the researcher. The manner in which these categories were created will be explained in the next section, the aim being 'a result your audience can rely on' (Richards, 2006, p.141). In order to achieve this aim readers must be convinced that that you have reliably examined the data and presented your findings in an honest and trustworthy fashion (Richards, 2006, p.141). All the information collected has been stored and can be made available for others to scrutinise.

In this research reliability was ensured by the question wording which was the same for all students and for all teachers after the piloting of the questionnaire. 'Spirituality' and 'spiritual development' were not explicitly taught at *Metropolitan University* on undergraduate and postgraduate courses (apart from those in their second year of the primary course who are specialising in religious education) other than as an aspect of Personal and Social Education/Personal, Social and Health Education (PSE/PSHE) in education studies. Students at *County Town University* specialising in religious education receive one brief session (of about one hour) on the contribution of religious education to spiritual development in schools. Students' prior knowledge of 'spirituality' and the 'spiritual development' of pupils were not checked and no formal preparation or introduction to this area was given before they were asked to complete the questionnaires. The information gathered from the questionnaires and from the interviews was considered to be an honest reflection and thus an accurate indication of the views and thoughts of the respondents and interviewees at the time and as such stable and accurate. It may well be the case that the information obtained from the

students and the teachers would be different had they been given the questionnaires or interviewed after extensive reading and/or receiving instruction about these topics. The interview to some extent was also used to check the accuracy of questionnaires (Belson, 1986, pp.35-38). A possible shortcoming was, however, the fact that those who volunteered to be interviewed had positive or neutral views of spirituality and the spiritual development of pupils in schools and there is a distinct possibility that those who chose not to volunteer to be interviewed may well have held negative views which would have counter balanced the views of those who were interviewed. In defence of the analysis based upon the data collected it was considered that there were representative negative comments on the questionnaires to offset the information gathered through interview to make a valid and reliable judgement on the perceptions of teachers and students on these matters. In terms of the positive views obtained by interview they corresponded to the comments obtained by questionnaire, thus providing a 'convergent validity' to the comparison. This is described as a process whereby 'if the two measures agree, it can be assumed that the validity of the interview is comparable with the proven validity of the other measure' (Cohen & Manion, 1994, p.281).

A standard question to determine the reliability and validity of the research is to ask if another researcher using the research instrument would be likely to obtain the same responses (Bell, 1997, p.65). A teacher whom I supervised on the Master's programme used my questionnaires as a basis to undertake action research on teachers' and pupils' perceptions of spirituality and spiritual development at her secondary school and the findings (unpublished thesis) corresponded with my own. In addition a colleague at *County Town University* administered the questionnaires to PGCE

religious education students and the variation in the responses tallied with those gathered at *Metropolitan University*.

3.9. Collection and Interpretation of materials

The information collected from the questionnaires, both quantitative and qualitative, was entered in full by the researcher onto a database management program (Microsoft Access). The advantage of this program is that it can store a large amount of data in which any one piece of information can be quickly located. Apart from being a data storage and retrieval system, Microsoft Access has many features for manipulating the information that is stored and allows the researcher, for example, to extract and work with subsets of information. Statistical information was gathered using the filter and query systems, whereas repeated reading and analysis of the textual data recorded (on screen and printed version) was undertaken to analyse, categorise and evaluate the qualitative information stored. This involved repeated reading, coding and highlighting key phrases (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983, pp.177-178; Sandelowski, 1995; Richards, 2006). The mode of analysis used was dependent upon the format of the questionnaires that had been distributed and collected. Closed questions were relatively easy to deal with and provided much of the statistical quantitative data. The open-ended questions were more difficult to analyse given the variety of answers in both content and length. One obvious method was to distinguish between the positive and negative comments or somewhat more challenging comments which combined favourable comments with reservations or vice versa. The delicate aspect was interpreting and categorising the responses and then cross-referencing and collating these in different groupings, for example those who claimed to have had a spiritual experience against their gender and

their subsequent views on the spiritual development of pupils in schools. The success or failure of this enterprise will be judged by the reader of the next chapter, but first I should explain in more detail the methods of analysis and especially how the categories of interpretation were decided upon.

3.9.1 Collecting and analysing words and phrases

The length of responses to open-ended questions varied from one word to several paragraphs. As has already been stated, these were added to and stored on a database management program. These qualitative textual records along with the copious notes taken during the interviews provided the basis of the material to be analysed. For the purpose of analysis these responses were treated as free-flowing texts. In essence coding is, as Kerlinger (1986) says, the translation of question responses and respondent information to specific categories for the purpose of analysis. Ryan and Bernard (2003, p.268) refer to two types of analysis. 'In one, the text is segmented into its most basic, meaningful components: words. In the other, meanings are found in large blocks of text'. Both types of analysis were employed in this research. A variety of patterns arose from the material and the researcher must be cautious that he/she does not latch on to the first patterns which appear and subsequently attempt to force the remainder of the data to fit these initial patterns or categories (Kane & O'Reilly-De Burn, 2005, p.366). An inductive approach was considered preferential to a deductive one for this allowed the patterns and categories to unfold as they emerged from the data collected and scrutinised. The coding was in response to the data collected rather than decided upon in advance (apart from fixed response questions), even though the exploration of the theoretical field had suggested the occurrence of likely categories.

The plentiful and often detailed information collected necessitated an element of data reduction whilst retaining and respecting the integrity of the qualitative data (Cohen *et al.*, 2007, p.475). In order to summarise and report the written recorded data, without compromising the complexity and detail of the responses logged, the method selected best to convey this was elaborated description (Brown & Dowling, 1998, p.157) or ‘thick description’ (Geertz, 1973). This is the basis for the presentation of data in the next chapter and includes a mixture of summaries and verbatim responses in order to retain the ‘flavour’ of the original data. Such a way of reporting allows the reader to ascribe his/her own interpretation to the meaning and significance of the qualitative data and the manner in which the researcher has coded and categorised it (Patton, 2002, p.438). A key factor was that the examples selected should be truly representative of the data set, showing the commonalities, differences and similarities. It remains a fine balance retaining the integrity and coherence of the individual responses whilst at the same time providing a collective summary. Quantitative summaries with simple tables, also found in the next chapter, are of some value in showing the representativeness of the examples selected (Brown & Dowling, 1998, p.157).

Applying what Parlett and Hamilton (1976) call ‘progressive focusing’ was considered the best approach to the data as it was gathered and as it grew. This involved taking a wide angle lens to gather data and then sifting, sorting, reviewing and reflecting on the salient features as they emerged. ‘The process is akin to funnelling from the wide to the narrow’ (Cohen *et al.*, 2007, p.462). The study of the theoretical field had suggested potential categories into which the data might be grouped. Indeed, it has been recommended that researchers start with some general themes derived from

their review of literature and modify these as they proceed (Willms *et al.*, 1990; Miles & Huberman, 1994). In our review of literature we identified important features associated with the word 'spiritual' and its associated 'spiritual development'. These were a sense of wholeness and being fully human; feelings of transcendence; the significance of relationships; and the consideration of 'ultimate questions' and the search for meaning in life. In addition to this we also considered the often confusing relationship between spirituality and morality and spirituality and religion. In chapter one we saw that the guidance provided for teachers and schools subdivided the fundamental features of 'spirituality' and 'spiritual development' between inner understanding and development, and looking beyond this to the wonder and mystery of life and the universe. The guidance therefore defined spirituality as being something both immanent and transcendent. We considered how these key characteristics of 'looking inwards' and 'looking outwards' have been applied by educationalists with a range of practical suggestions and activities. Given this background there was the clear potential that these themes would emerge from the data.

There were also the themes and categories identified by others who had researched this area. Hay and Nye (1998) had identified three broad categories of spiritual sensitivity, namely awareness-sensing; mystery-sensing and value-sensing. Bainbridge (2000) recognised five categories: notions of finding oneself; the spiritual and religion; hints of transcendence; the spiritual found in relationships; and the spiritual and morality. Rogers and Hill (2002) also acknowledged five categories of response from those on initial primary teacher education courses. Their categories included spirituality and the self (reflection); religion: nature (environment/universe); relationships; and major life events (birth/marriage/death). Whilst the categories used

by others have been noted, the categories used in this analysis were not pre-ordinately determined in advance of the data collection. Indeed, as more data were added, an additional category emerged. The early stages of the research gave rise to a journal article (Rawle & Geen, 2005) based on 207 returned questionnaires from students and teachers which identified four categories – religion, morality, relationships and personal philosophy – on which ‘spirituality’ was based. Additional responses collected contained comments which did not sit easily within these initial categories based on the existing data. This newly acquired data led to the creation of another category – increased awareness of life and the world. This goes some way to illustrate how my own preconceptions and biases were as far as possible restrained in order to adopt a more reflexive, reactive interaction with the data. Such modifications comply with the advice given by Bogdan and Biklen (1992, p.72) and Richards (2006, pp.97-99) on undertaking analytic induction. The mutual agreement over the initial categories with a co-author and my Director of Studies adds some weight (Ryan, 1999; Richards, 2006, p.99) to the coding interpretation and addresses Carley’s (1993) concerns of different coders producing different maps and making different choices. Discrete coding and categorizing started early but were undertaken with an awareness of the danger that such coding might influence too strongly any later codes (Miles & Huberman, 1984).

3.9.2 Organising and presenting the data

There are several ways of organising and presenting the data. Cohen *et al.* (2007, pp.467-468) list five such ways: by groups; by individuals; by issue; by research question; and by instrument. A combination of some of these has been used to present the findings of this research. In the next chapter the findings are organised around the questions asked on the questionnaires and during interviews. The key issues raised on

the questionnaires were: the meaning of spirituality; the extent and types of spiritual experience; the curriculum, school life and spiritual experience; the spiritual development of pupils; and the role of the teacher in the spiritual development of pupils. A representative selection of the varied responses to these questions on the key issues are reported and dispersed across these headings. In chapter five the data collected is analysed against the research questions, namely: the correspondence of the responses with the ‘official’ guidance on spirituality and spiritual development; the extent of the implementation of this guidance; and the consequence (if any) of gender, length of service, age phase taught and subject specialism. The grouping of the data collected under headings such as these enables the themes, patterns, similarities and differences to be seen, though it must be acknowledged that the coherence of the individual response across the questionnaire risks being lost to a collective summary (Cohen *et al.*, 2007, p.467). Grouping the data according to research questions and using it to answer these questions has the advantage, as Cohen *et al.* (2007, p.468) say, of returning ‘the reader to the driving concerns of the research, thereby “closing the loop” on the research questions that typically were raised in the early part of the inquiry’.

3.9.3. Content analysis and grounded theory

Content analysis and grounded theory are the two of the foremost forms of qualitative data analysis (Cohen *et al.*, 2007, p.475). The former is used to identify themes, concepts and meanings, whilst the latter generates theories through data rather than through prior hypotheses. It is possible, sometimes even desirable, to combine alternative methods of analysis (Patton, 2002, p.248) when conducting research. The searching of the textual data for recurring words, patterns and themes, making sense of

it, reducing it, and identifying core consistencies and meanings (Patton, 2002, p.453) can all be described as a form of content analysis. Patton (2002, p.453) defines a *pattern* as a descriptive finding, for example ‘Almost all respondents reported ...’ and a *theme* as a category or topical form, such as ‘fear’. The following chapters give examples of both patterns and themes identified in the data. As has already been stated, the way in which this was accomplished was through inductive analysis and open-coding rather than deductive analysis. The pattern of specific words and phrases is less inferential than the attendant categories determined by the researcher (Cohen *et al.*, 2007, p.479). Having said this we have also acknowledged that an existing framework derived from the work of others was tentatively considered when formulating the categories and the relationship between the present findings and previous research and theory has been identified in the text where it occurs. The failure to acknowledge prior theories is one of the major criticisms of grounded theory (Silverman, 2006, p.96). Here these prior theories were a guide rather than a determinant in the analysis. Sometimes previous research and theory is confirmed, sometimes it is rejected and sometimes there is insufficient evidence to either confirm or contradict the work of others. Content analysis, however, remains more of an art than a science (Burns, 2000, p.434).

The manner in which the theory emerges from the data in qualitative research has been termed *grounded theory* (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Over the years grounded theory has grown from its idiosyncratic beginnings to an accepted methodological orthodoxy (Dey, 2004, pp.80-81). Glaser (1996) stated that ‘the world does not exist in a vacuum’ and actions are interconnected. This research considers what teachers do, and what students both do and propose to do in the classroom, in terms of their responsibility to provide opportunities for the spiritual development of pupils. The

methodology based on grounded theory explores inconsistencies such as between what people believe should be the case and how they should act, and what they *actually* do about these beliefs. For example, just because a respondent may have positive views on spiritual development and believes it has a place in schools it does not mean he or she actively plans for it to take place. Rather than a strict adherence to the methods proposed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) it is the general principle of the data determining the categories and thus generating the theory that has been adopted here.

3.10 Presentation of data, languages of description and analysis

To a large extent we have already covered issues of presentation of data and analysis. The reader is, however, reminded of the ways in which the data were gathered, categorised and analysed and above all to explain the manner in which information is presented in the next two chapters. The data came from five hundred and four returned questionnaires and eight interviews, and were inductively categorised with the analysis linked to the theoretical field. The results are presented using elaborated description which is employed to illustrate and justify the categorisation. Items can often be assigned to more than one category and some (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983) see this as desirable as it maintains the richness of the data (Cohen *et al.*, 2007, p.479). The sub-headings correspond to the research questions which are, in turn, related to questions found on the questionnaires. Burns (2000, p.434) reminds us that other plausible explanations will always exist ‘and the researcher must demonstrate how and why their explanation is the most plausible of all’. It is for the reader to judge whether or not this is the case and if the challenge of the research to ‘move beyond its findings via processes of empirical and theoretical generalization’ (Brown & Dowling, 1998, p.147) has been met.

Chapter 4

Presentation of data

We have looked at the legislation and subsequent ‘official’ guidance (chapter one) given to teachers and schools, regarding the promotion of the spiritual development of pupils. The broad conclusion is that such opportunities provided should be sufficiently inclusive to cater for those of a religious persuasion along with those who are either agnostic about such matters or reject altogether the tenets of theistic beliefs. This is to be achieved by encouraging pupils to look both within themselves and to reflect upon the experiences of life which take us ‘beyond the mundane and the material’ (ACCAC, 2000, p.7).

The ensuing ‘academic’ debate (chapter two) which both followed from and coexisted alongside the guidance to schools acknowledged the confusion and offered scholarly suggestions. When we examined the literature which has been spawned by these bookish deliberations we tentatively identified certain characteristics of what might be considered ‘spiritual’. These were a sense of transcendence, positive relationships, and a search for meaning and truth. We also concluded that, whilst a precise definition of ‘spirituality’ and ‘spiritual development’ is extremely difficult to acquire and not altogether desirable given the range of personal interpretations and individual experiences, it is prudent to apply parameters to these interpretations and experiences. Given that schools should focus on promoting the positive aspects of ‘spirituality’ and ‘spiritual development’ we should temper our evaluations of the spiritual with reference to reason, shared objective reality and morality. The application of these theoretical deliberations combines both process and content that

incorporates a positive school ethos which is one of mutual care, respect and recognition of the intrinsic value of the individual and the wider community. It allows and encourages pupils to ask questions and explore complex issues of meaning and values based on what is pertinent to them along with the insights of the great thinkers and major traditions.

4.1 Research aims

The principal aim of this research was:

1. to discover what ‘spirituality’ and ‘spiritual development’ meant to a sample of teachers and students, and
2. how far their views correlate with the official guidance.

In order to fulfil these aims the data collected must enable us to answer a number of questions. In many respects it is the perennial problem of definitions which forms the main focus of this research. How do teachers and students on undergraduate and postgraduate initial teacher training courses themselves define ‘spirituality’ and the ‘spiritual development’ of those in their charge? Do the official and academic definitions correspond to the ‘popular’ classroom definitions that emerge from the collated responses? What, if any, is the correlation between their own spiritual experiences and beliefs and the way in which they perceive the function of the spiritual in school? Do views vary according to gender, subject specialisms, age phases, choice and type of school? Is it more likely that teachers will have a positive attitude to providing opportunities for spiritual development based on their length of service and senior positions of responsibility within the school? To what extent do both students and teachers consider it to be part of their role to promote this

dimension of education? The responses to these questions were determined through questionnaires and interviews.

4.2 Responses to questions asked

The first section of the questionnaire required participants to state what the terms ‘spirituality’, ‘spiritual experience’ and ‘the spiritual development of pupils’ meant to them. As explained in the last chapter the decision was taken not to provide them with a range of definitions which could be ticked on a Likert scale as some researchers have done (e.g. Elton-Chalcraft, 2001), as this can influence and prejudice their replies. The difficulty in trying to articulate the meanings of these terms was readily acknowledged by some teachers and students. As one respondent said, ‘I find it hard to exactly define what I believe spirituality is’. One hundred and thirty four students and teachers either left this section of the questionnaire blank, inserted a question mark or stated they were unsure what ‘spirituality’ meant to them. One said that the word meant ‘many different kinds of things’ to her whilst another said he ‘didn’t really know’ as he ‘had never thought about it’. Despite this not unexpected ambiguity and difficulty with precise definitions the vast majority (three hundred and seventy: see Table I) did ascribe a meaning to the words.

4.2.1 The Meaning of Spirituality and the correspondence with the guidance for teachers and schools

From the many varying definitions received, it was possible to identify one underlying theme, and this was the belief that the ‘spiritual’ and ‘spirituality’ involves the acquisition of a set of principles which guide and often add depth to our everyday lives. As intangible as the spiritual might be, the experience of it is, in the main, both positive and significant for the individual. As one teacher put it, ‘the spiritual element

of human make-up is an essential element in personhood'. Most consider spirituality to be important in their lives and feel that it contributes to their well-being and to the way in which they view themselves, helping them clarify their beliefs and their place in the world (Gollnick, 2004, p.124; Carr, 1996, p.173). Typical replies were:

- Spirituality is 'a development of yourself. A way to advance both physically and mentally; also it helps me with my problems with belief'.
- 'This is what drives you as a person'.
- 'Having an understanding of own beliefs and being able to follow this belief system appropriately'.
- 'Your beliefs by how you live your life; your feelings on life'.
- 'It is the ability to have views and feelings on different aspects of life that inspire you and the things you do'.
- 'A latent inner-self which manifests itself when following certain guiding principles'.
- 'I feel spirituality is about the way you think and how this affects your life'.
- 'Being aware of "self" beyond daily physical and emotional needs'.
- 'Spirituality is having a belief or system of beliefs and values on which to base our lives'.

This response would seem to confirm the importance of the spiritual aspect of a person in society (ACCAC, 2000) and add weight to the arguments of those who affirm its place and value in the educational system. What, however, is the source of these principles? Are we able to place the many responses into broad categories? The answer is a tentative 'yes'. I say 'tentative' as the categories will to some extent be determined by my interpretation and analysis of the responses. There inevitably remains a degree of personal interpretation of the categorisation of responses offered, given the subtle

variations. The manner in which this categorisation was arrived at has been explained in the chapter on methodology (chapter 3) along with the work of other researchers in this field. Hay and Nye (1998, p.59) identified three broad categories of spiritual sensitivity, namely awareness-sensing, mystery-sensing and value-sensing, whilst Bainbridge (2000) listed the following five categories: notions of finding oneself; the spiritual and religion; hints of transcendence; the spiritual as found in relationships; and the spiritual and morality. Rogers and Hill (2002) also formed five categories for the responses of those on initial primary teacher education courses. Their categories included spirituality and the self (reflection); religion; nature (environment/universe); relationships; and major life events (birth/marriage/death). Many of the responses recorded from the questionnaires and interviews could be regarded as fitting the categories listed above, and the broad categories I have identified do indeed overlap with them. The process of coding and categorising was inductive and emerged from the responses collected.

It was possible to categorise the source of these principles as:

1. a religion;
2. a personal philosophy;
3. a set of moral values;
4. beliefs about the types of relationships a person should have with other people;
and
5. an increased awareness of life and the world (see Table 1).

There was considerable cross-over in responses with respondents, not unnaturally, identifying more than one of these categories in their definitions of 'spirituality'. For example, one teacher wrote, 'to me spirituality has two dimensions: firstly my own spiritual self associated with my beliefs, and secondly spirituality as an

awareness of awe and wonder at all things in our life and around us'. This combines categories 1 and 5. Another said, "“spiritual” to me means different kinds of things whether it is a belief in God, the after life or emotions. Spiritual not only means believing in God but to me it also means subjects such as soul, spirits, emotions and feelings towards others'. Here we have a combination of categories 1, 2 and 4. A student said, 'being spiritual to me means having a belief whether it's by having belief in one's self, in God or a religion, in doing something that means a lot to the individual, for example by reading poetry, drawing etc.. I think being spiritual is about the person and what they themselves see as the outlook of life'. Categories 1 and 2 are combined in this response. Just as a person's beliefs to a lesser or greater extent determine their outlook on life which includes their moral views and relationships with others and their environment, so it was with spirituality.

As with the students and teachers referred to above who saw 'spirituality' in terms of more than one of the categories identified there were others who made explicit this cross-over between categories, especially that between the religious and moral. The link between the two was stronger for some than others. For example, one student wrote that 'spirituality' 'is the development of moral and religious beliefs in a person' and another that it 'could mean either a religious standpoint or a general understanding of personal and moral beliefs'. Indeed, a person's moral stance in life may well be determined by their religious convictions. Whilst spirituality is not dependent upon religion, the moral aspect of the spiritual may well be closely linked to the values closely associated with religion (see chapter two). As a teacher said, 'If you mean by religious going to church then I believe people can be spiritual without this. (It is) believing in helping each other and fostering values which reflect Christian

beliefs'. For others it was the moral which was the more important of the two (religion and morality) when it came to specify what is key to spirituality - 'a person can be moral and "good" but not religious and many amoral people can hide behind a cloak of religion' said one teacher. Another argued that spirituality 'fosters the belief in a moral code of living, despite the faith' and another wrote that 'you don't necessarily have to believe in God to have beliefs, know right and wrong, good and bad'. Not all agreed, for as one student put it 'one can do many "good" things "religiously" but have no faith which I believe is fundamental to spirituality'. Another was clear that it 'is more about religion than moral development'.

Table I indicates the responses received where some of the responses which covered more than one of the categories have been counted in each of the categories referred to.

Table I: Percentages of respondents who defined 'spirituality' in terms of principles derived from: (*N = 504 number of questionnaires returned*
NI = 370 number of respondents who wrote specific comments on meaning of 'spirituality'.)

Categories of 'Spirituality'	<i>N</i>	<i>NI</i>
Religion	33.9%	55.7%
Personal philosophy	23.6%	32.1%
Moral principles and values	11.1%	15.1%
Social skills and relationships with others	5.7%	7.8%
Increased awareness of life and the world.	14.2%	19.4%

4.2.1.2 Religion

The most popular view of spirituality offered by both students and teachers was the adoption of principles which derived from some kind of religious creed. ‘My own relationship with a higher power! This relationship fashions the way I choose to lead my life. It is a way of life that I have chosen’, was the way in which one teacher expressed it. Again, this is not surprising given that the majority of respondents regarded themselves as having a personal religious faith, the majority being Christian (see Table II). It may well be the case that we should not place too much emphasis on this as the findings of censuses and surveys indicate that the correlation between a person’s identification with Christianity and actual attendance at a Christian place of worship is not a high one (Wright, 2000; BBC, 2000; Streib, 2005). What we have is a nominal commitment towards Christianity from the majority of people in Britain today and this may well be the case with a significant number of respondents. We have seen that, when people are asked to define what they mean by ‘spiritual’ and describe experiences they deem to be ‘spiritual’, they will often employ the language associated with religion. Part of the reason for this, as Hay suggested, is that ‘no obvious alternative to religion has emerged with sufficient power to act as a vehicle for the nurture of spiritual awareness’ (Hay & Nye, 1998, p.39). As one student put it, ‘personally it doesn’t mean a lot to me and when I hear the word “spiritual” I think of God and religion’.

Table II: identified beliefs of respondents in order of priority where given.

Christian	313
Agnostic	72
Atheist	56
Muslim	4
Pagan / Wiccan	2
Buddhist	1
Hindu	1
Sikh	1
Theist	1
Bahai	1
Sai Baba	1
Spiritualist	1
Jewish	0

Reference was frequently made to ‘faith or belief in a being greater than myself’, ‘my connection with God’ and ‘God as omniscient force within our lives who is there to help, guide and support us’. There were those who extended this religious source of the spiritual to all faiths – ‘the ability to have an understanding of God within the different faiths’ for ‘no one particular religion is better than another’ - and those who preferred to speak of a higher power or force, rather than use the word God, which might or might not have personal attributes but the awareness of this ‘greater power’ brings ‘peace and understanding’ to the individual. For one it was the

belief in the ‘probability of a higher being/god’ which brought ‘meaning and purpose’ to life. For another it involved selecting aspects of religion he considered relevant to his life – ‘I believe that a person can be spiritual by taking elements of different beliefs and applying them to his own belief code’. These respondents who were less precise did not feel that spirituality implied acceptance of a specific faith or set of theological tenets but rather that ‘spirituality’ implied a belief in the existence of some ‘being that makes sense of the world in which we live’. As one student interviewed put it:

It is the belief in something higher which could be God or a higher intelligence. You can believe in a force but not a being with a white beard. It is what shapes the way the world is, moving through time. It is some kind of catalyst within and without us, part of what we are and what we will become. I believe in something beyond death, a separate plane of existence (which includes animals) and is like a fourth dimension.

Others were not so inclusive and for them it was exclusively their Christian faith which provided their spiritual sustenance. As one student said of ‘spirituality’, ‘I think of it as an experience of the Holy Spirit within a Christian context’. For another it was, ‘God, Jesus, the Holy Ghost and being a Christian.’ One student said she tended to confuse spirituality with ‘spiritualist beliefs’ which were contrary to her beliefs as a Christian and would much rather think of it as ‘an experience with the Holy Spirit within a Christian context’.

Others did identify ‘spirituality’ with what might be broadly classed as spiritualism as a source of their own understanding of the word. Thus one said, ‘to me it is a force or power that you can’t see or feel but influences you in some shape or form. I would say I am spiritual because I believe in the spirits and there is life after

death but there is no doubt in my mind that God does not exist'. Not all saw a contradiction between believing in the spirits and believing in God as both might be seen as occupying the 'supernatural' realm. 'Ghosts are spirits so are spiritual' said one. Another wrote that 'spiritual not only means believing in God but to me it also means subjects such as soul, spirits, emotions and feelings towards others'.

Whilst the majority of those who placed the spiritual within a religious framework did so in a affirmative way, there was a minority which did not consider religion always to be a positive source of guidance and submitted pejorative comments about 'Bible bashing' and that, 'a religion is almost fake, you are told that there is a God and that Jesus will come again. Spirituality is a belief in God but not religion'. Another referred to the possible detrimental and stifling effect of conformity to a creed and argued that 'religious misconceptions and pre-conceptions can hinder spiritual growth'. Indeed, one claimed 'people can be outwardly religious but spiritually dead' and another that 'spirituality tends to decrease in those who stringently follow one faith'. One even said that 'in fact a person is more likely to be spiritual if they are not religious'. Naturally, as we have seen, not all held this view and some were diametrically opposed to it. As one said, 'people who are religious can be more spiritual because religious times are often (*times*) when contemplative thought and being reflective are encouraged, with situations presented for this time (*of contemplation and reflection*)'.

4.2.1.3 The distinction between spirituality and religion

Despite these responses which saw the source of their own spirituality stemming from some religious foundation, 75 per cent of students and teachers felt

that a person could be spiritual without necessarily being religious with little difference in the two groups (74 per cent of students and 76 per cent of teachers). As one student put it, 'although I believe the idea of religion itself is spiritual I do not think you have to be religious to be spiritual. I do not believe in religion and yet still consider myself spiritual'. Or, as another said, 'spiritual feelings and occurrences happen all the time. They have value regardless of belief and without the restraints or label of religion'. It appears that personal faith and identification with a religious belief have little bearing on the responses. One teacher who herself was a committed Christian was adamant that a person 'can be an atheist and spiritual'. For example, of the three hundred and thirteen who said they were Christian only sixteen said that a person could not be spiritual without being religious with only a slightly lower percentage (71 per cent) than the overall percentage saying that spirituality and religion were not synonymous. (Indeed 24 per cent of those who claimed to have had a 'spiritual experience' identified themselves as either atheist or agnostic.) Hence it was argued that:

- 'A belief in God is not necessary to access your inner self.'
- 'Spirituality is a state of mind not a religion.'
- 'A person may adopt principles which agree in part with a religion's teachings but not with all of them.'

Part of the reason was the difficulty in precisely saying what spirituality is and the recognition that many of the qualities people associate with spirituality and a spiritual person are present in those who profess very little or no religious faith. As one said, 'people can be religious without being spiritual. It is a personal feeling and one person's spirituality might be very different to someone else's'. Another stated, 'I

think spiritual is a very fuzzy generalised term (or is so defined conventionally) so it can apply to many aspects of personality/experience'. Indeed, a number considered that it was spirituality which determined one's beliefs, saying 'spirituality is an integral part of one's own emotions, thoughts and feelings. Spirituality comes from within and is about shaping one's own beliefs'.

For some, as we have seen, the restrictions of religion were contrary, and even detrimental, to the free expression of spirituality. It is better to show, 'concern and compassion for self and others - an appreciation of the natural world - without all the trapping of formal religion'? As one teacher said, 'religion can be formal and unthinking whilst spirituality seems to be more deliberate' implying that 'a strict adherence to a dogma' suppresses this aspect of a person. Religion 'suggests you belong and identify with a group' whereas spirituality is more an expression of a person's individuality. One teacher thought those who belong to religions tended to 'live in a straight jacket of rights and wrongs, tend to be judgemental, fundamental and dismiss those of different belief systems'. There appears to be a clear recognition that 'spirituality' is not the sole preserve and prerogative of religion and to insist that this is the case would be to exclude and disenfranchise a significant number of people who clearly do experience a spiritual dimension to their lives. For spirituality is 'personal and unique for everybody' and 'an appreciation of the uniqueness of being human and the amazing nature and resilience of the human spirit does not require a belief in a higher being'. The emphasis was very much on the personal and individual interpretation of spirituality as an important part of a person's character for 'all people are spiritual and physical beings'. It can be summed up in the words of one student, 'organised religion is only one way of being spiritual - not even the most important

way in my opinion. Spirituality is a very individual thing'. Or, as another student succinctly put it, 'religion is a codified form of spirituality'. For one student the value of her spirituality held a greater significance for her than her religious beliefs: 'The older I get the more I feel that being "spiritual" is a greater gift than being religious'. Religion, for some, was a way of providing a context for their feelings.

Religion retains its important place in the lives of many, but there is a tension between religion and spirituality. A student put it thus: 'Religion has as its purpose a spiritual belief. However this is not always apparent. Religion is a framework for collective spirituality but spirituality does not need to be collective to consider others'. Here the spiritual incorporates two of the other sources of the principles deemed to be spiritual, namely moral values and relationships. Before we consider these sources of the principles which guide and add depth to our lives we shall consider another which we have touched upon within the religious domain and that is the individual aspect of spirituality which might be referred to as a personal philosophy.

4.2.1.4 Personal philosophy

Just under a quarter of the sample and just under a third of those who offered a comment conceived of spirituality in terms of acting in accordance with principles which were dependent on a personal philosophy. This was sometimes described as 'the inner self which makes each person individual', 'the inner soul which gives direction in life', 'the inner self in your subconscious which makes each person individuals' or 'soul searching about one's existence and purpose in life'. The term 'inner self' was used frequently by both teachers and students in an attempt to pinpoint this mysterious but nonetheless important aspect of a person. It is 'being

aware of “self” beyond daily physical and emotional needs’. Awareness of and access to this ‘inner self’ or ‘inner soul’ revealed and released their spiritual nature. Access to it could be facilitated through meditation and yoga which ‘focused on body and mind’. The important thing was that you are ‘in touch with your thoughts and feelings’. In other words it ‘is a state of mind’. Religion can assist with this process but ‘you don't need to believe in God to be happy and content with yourself. You don't need God to have a purpose and a meaning and to know how to behave towards others’. ‘Thinking about and learning to find an “inner self” brings an inner confidence and strength in oneself’ said one student, and another added that it ‘helps you become stronger inside’. One said that the spiritual helps you ‘come to terms’ with what happens in your life and it is ‘what keeps you going when nothing else can’. Another said that ‘spirituality’ is a ‘belief that you are more than a sum of your physical parts - an inner strength’. Not only this, but a deeper understanding of yourself ‘leads to a deeper understanding of what is around you’. There are those who argue (Mason, 2000) that much of what fits into this category need not necessarily be classed as spiritual. Are views, opinions and beliefs of life and its meaning and reasoning about such things as death and new life, spiritual or merely the natural characteristics all people whether they class themselves as spiritual or not? As a teacher said during interview, ‘the cross-over from the aesthetic to the spiritual is a personal thing’ or, as a student put it, ‘it was when the hairs on the back of your neck stand on end rather than just saying “that is beautiful”’. There are powerful arguments for both camps, but those questioned were allowed to determine for themselves whether or not they considered something to be spiritual. As we have stressed throughout this work, there is the perennial problem that what is deemed to be spiritual for one may not be for another. The following comment from a teacher

highlights the dilemma and to an extent the solution: ‘any experience that moves you emotionally and forces you to consider emotional issues and your attitude to them’. Emotional matters need not be seen as spiritual but ‘your attitude to them’ can transform them to a spiritual dimension. Thus they are deemed to be spiritual by the person experiencing the emotion(s). As the reader will recall from the literature review, Haldane (2003, p.14) argues, the spiritual is concerned with a person’s interpretation of experiences or, as he puts it, ‘what personal demeanour one develops in the face of reality as one understands it’. As one student said, it is ‘having a moment where you really think that what you have been believing has shown you a sign or an emotion’. Or as one teacher stated, it is ‘a personal quality of a higher order related especially to viewpoints on morals, ethics and religion’. An expression used to describe this realisation of one’s spiritual nature was ‘having an inner feeling’ which indicated to the recipient that what they are experiencing is something special. It is a ‘personal understanding of own beliefs and thoughts about life, why we are here and reasons for things happening’. This is the ‘quality of being able to be in tune with your feelings’. For one student this ‘ability’ is ‘completely personal’.

This is often reflected in a revaluing of what is important in life and a fresh perspective on what really matters. It is an increased ‘awareness of one’s humanity and existence which is not purely physical’, ‘having a sense of a reality that transcends the physical world’ which is ‘the ability to reflect deeply about the meaning of life’. It is ‘a sense of something apart from the physical and material world’ and ‘nurturing the “soul” - that which has to do with the “inner self” - not material objects or wealth’. It relates to the ‘intangible’ and ‘universal matters’. As one student put it, it is awareness that there ‘is more to life than the seemingly

mundane'. One of the consequences of this 'spiritual' outlook on life is, as a student said, that it helps 'develop who you are and defines the way you want to live your life'. She continued by saying that the spiritual provided you with a 'set of guidelines' for life and as such 'the spiritual and moral were intertwined'.

4.2.1.5 Moral principles and values

For 15 per cent of those who offered a definition, a person's spirituality depended upon the formation of moral principles and values. One equated 'having a good spirit' with 'being a good person', while a second expressed the importance of 'being caring and compassionate'. As we have seen, some equated this with their religious beliefs whilst others were more reticent to forge this connection. For some these moral issues are but one of the many parts of asking questions about life and thus an inevitable ingredient of what constitutes spirituality. 'Spirituality', one said, was 'considering the "deeper" questions e.g. identity, existence, right and wrong, moral values which enable pupils to think through their own beliefs and consider those of others'. Another said 'spirituality is about feeling good about yourself and being conscious of ethics and morals'. For another it has all to 'do with correct behaviour under various situations'. Echoing the views of Williams (1997) and Hull (1996) some stressed the community aspect and 'link to citizenship - good pupil behaviour and moral awareness', and 'moral and social issues'.

Further responses included, 'goodness, honesty and compassion', 'the development of one's moral beliefs with a view to gaining greater understanding' and 'a moral code of living'. As one student put it, 'being spiritual is reaching a state of well being in one's mind. It is to understand the difference between good and bad'.

Another, during an interview, defined the spiritual as ‘a set of higher values you are deemed to live your life by and is similar to moral’. Closely connected with this category of reply were analyses which stressed the importance of social skills and relationships with others.

4.2.1.6 Social skills and relationships with others

In the review of literature (chapter two) we identified relationships as one of the characteristics of spirituality. These relationships incorporated not only relationships with others but with ourselves, God or a higher power and the world or environment in which we live (Bradford, 1995; Fisher, 1999). For the purpose of this categorization the focus is upon the spiritual as signifying our relationships and interaction with others and society at large rather than the other areas as these have been included in the other categories. For example, a belief in God or a connection with a higher power comes under the sub-heading of ‘religion’ whilst a relationship with ourselves comes under ‘personal philosophy’. The global (Fisher, 1999) aspect of relationships will form part of the section ‘increased awareness of life and the world’. The percentage of those who explicitly referred to this aspect of the spiritual was only 7.8 per cent, which is considerably less than the other categories into which their definitions fall. Despite this we should not underestimate the significance of the way in which relationships contribute to ‘spirituality’ and ‘spiritual development’.

When asked what features of school life made a positive contribution to their spiritual development two hundred and one students indicated their relationship with friends and one hundred and fifty four students their relationship with teachers. This accounts for almost a half and 36 per cent respectively of the students surveyed. In

the view of one teacher a person's spirituality is 'acquired within the community, family and peer group'.

The comments of one teacher serve to illustrate the importance of relationships when defining the spiritual: 'I find the idea of the spiritual very difficult. My happiness tends to come from my relationship with other people and I would find it impossible to be happy living a "spiritual life" e.g. nuns, priests etc. I lay great importance on the way human beings treat others and to me that's the most important thing'. There is clearly a connection with the moral aspect of 'spirituality' with respondents frequently mentioning 'concern', 'consideration' and 'compassion' for others. A key element in 'helping others' was the ability to empathise with them or, as a teacher put it, 'to become a kind, compassionate person is to be able to see other points of view'. In the words of one student it meant 'to be able to be in tune with their feelings and empathise with others'. For a teacher this 'empathising with others' involves 'reaching out and communicating'. This, for another, entails 'respect of yourself and others' and being 'happy with yourself and acceptance of your and of others' differences'.

The social skills involved in positive relationships involve both understanding and acceptance of difference whilst at the same time seeing that there is an innate similarity with all human beings. As one student said, it is 'understanding how you connect on a non-physical plane with others'. It is the quality of 'interaction' with others. Whilst spirituality involves 'thinking through your own beliefs' it also involves 'considering the beliefs of others'. One student referred to this as having a 'feeling for yourself and others', while another saw in this 'ability' the need to 'consider people, events and relationships', an 'intellectual' capacity. It involves

‘exploring meaning in who we are and how we are linked together’. This connection between us, others and the world around us was well expressed by a teacher who defined ‘spirituality’ as ‘a sense of oneness with the natural world and the people we share it with; to learn to love everything about the world and to respect each other’. Comments such as this and that of the teacher who said that for him ‘spirituality’ meant ‘a sense of wonder and awe; the ability to reflect deeply about the meaning of life - basic questions and a sense of unity with creation, God and others’ lead us towards the next category of which the ‘spiritual’ comprises an increased awareness of life and the world. As a teacher wrote, ‘spirituality’ is ‘an awareness of a connection joining us all together. An appreciation that knowledge is in its infancy and our sensory perceptions may be just the beginning of our understanding of the world around us’.

4.2.1.7 Increased awareness of life and the world

Just over 19 per cent of those who offered a definition of ‘spirituality’ mentioned a depth of awareness of life, the environment, the beauty of the world and the ‘oneness’ of creation. As one respondent put it, ‘it is an awareness of the bigger picture of things and more than meets the naked eye’, and another, ‘my interpretation of the term relates to self-awareness, the world around us and natural phenomenon’. As with the other categories there were variations in the interpretation of what was meant by a heightened awareness. For some students and teachers it bordered on the ‘New Age’ and paranormal. Not all were lucidly expressed with one speaking of its being ‘life outside the touchable objects of the world’ such as ‘horoscopes’ and another ‘the belief that there is some form of contact with another world or if not

contact definitely an existence!!!’ Others referred to ‘ghosts’, ‘spirits’ and ‘angels’ or as one teacher put it, ‘ethereal entities’.

The majority of responses in this category, however, were similar to that of the student who indicated that ‘spirituality’ was ‘any feeling that there is another and deeper dimension to our conscious life’. Another said ‘I find it hard to exactly define what I believe spirituality is; put simply I believe it means being aware of life and being alive, being conscious that life and nature have a power of their own’. It is a case of the individual tuning in to ‘a reality that transcends the physical world’, yet is part of the world. A corollary of this increased awareness is ‘a belief in the greater meaning of life and its purpose’ which results in a fresh perspective on the way in which we see ourselves and the world. One student referred to this as a ‘symbiotic relationship with nature’ which was akin to ‘anthropomorphising it’. The terms ‘awe’ and ‘wonder’, often associated with spiritual development in schools (McCreery, 2001), were used by a number of respondents who were perhaps familiar with the guidance from various bodies on these matters. One spoke of ‘feeling a “buzz”’ (Watson, 2001) when looking at the world around you and feeling happy that God had created such a beautiful world’.

For others it is a particular way of thinking. One student referred to ‘spirituality’ as ‘being reflective towards one’s thinking; thinking deep and soul searching about one’s existence and purpose in life’. For these it is the process rather than finding answers and solutions. Indeed, some realised that they are dealing with ‘powers and forces that are beyond the knowledge of human comprehension’ which one student said, ‘means an understanding of something beyond understanding or

trying to understand the non-understandable'. Another student said 'spirituality' is 'to understand or be aware of there being a reason for humans to be brought into existence' though 'whilst on earth we would not know this reason or purpose. It would be revealed after death'. The fact that satisfactory solutions to life's questions may be beyond our capabilities should not prevent us from continuing the search for answers. For a teacher 'spirituality is 'being aware that possibly we are part of a larger picture that we do not fully comprehend but need to explore'. It is matter of 'having an open mind on all things', a 'free mind and a free spirit'. There is a similarity here with Wright's definition (2000) that spirituality entails asking and considering 'ultimate questions'.

The great imponderable for some was one we focused upon in the literature review and is mentioned by the student cited above and one which Sutherland (1995) sees as central to any definition of 'spirituality', namely: 'What, if anything, comes after death?' The awareness of our finitude undoubtedly directs our thinking to questions of meaning, purpose and our place in the scheme of things. Thus one student referred to 'an individual's own personal beliefs that are connected to the world beyond life and death' and another of thinking about 'what happens to you in life, and after'. For some the attentiveness to these questions leads to an emotional response and 'overwhelming emotions and feelings associated with facing life and death'. One teacher who experienced a life threatening illness spoke of an awareness and realisation of her own mortality as spiritual and it was during this illness that she had what she regarded as a spiritual experience. What then did students and teachers say about 'spiritual experiences'?

4.3 The extent and meaning of ‘spiritual experiences’

When they were asked whether or not they had had what might be classed as a spiritual experience, only 28 per cent of the students (this rose to 55.5 per cent when the percentage was calculated based on the students who indicated they had attended a faith school) and 43 per cent of the teachers answered in the affirmative. Just over 15 per cent of teachers and 20 per cent of students were ‘unsure’ as to whether or not they had had a spiritual experience [See Table VII for a breakdown by subject specialisms]. These findings do not altogether correspond to most other research studies covered in the literature review (Hay, 1979; Robinson and Jackson, 1987; Hay and Nye, 1998; Zohar and Marshall, 2000) which have sought to determine how common spiritual experience is. Part of the difficulty is how we define and classify what is a spiritual experience. A spiritual experience can be momentary or prolonged; it can be spectacular or merely a new insight. The comments of one teacher illustrate this dilemma when she wrote,

This is not a spiritual experience but it is a sense of spirituality personal to me. I really enjoy attending church and visiting churches and cathedrals. Over the years I have always experienced a sense of calm and belonging. I love the music, hymns, tradition and the welcome I receive from all the people I meet. I also think the architecture, colours and stained glass windows are very uplifting.

Do we class this as a spiritual experience or not? Despite her reservations she responded with a ‘yes’ in the spiritual experience column of the questionnaire, although others might prefer to interpret these as just having the disposition to appreciate some of the finer things of life. Possibly, as a result of the question – *Have you ever had what you would class as a spiritual experience?* - the findings of this research run counter to most other research that aimed to determine how common spiritual experience is by asking people to say if they had, or had not, been aware of,

or influenced by a presence or 'power', whether referred to as God or not, which is different from their everyday lives (Hardy, 1979; Hay, 1978; Jackson, 1997; Watson, 2001). Hay (1979) found that 65 per cent of his students said they were aware of a presence or power different from the self. Jackson (1997) found that 70 per cent of those questioned had experienced feelings of euphoria and well being accompanied by a deep insight and a new perspective on life. Half those questioned in a Gallup Omnibus Survey in Britain in 1986 felt they had had a spiritual experience (Hay and Nye, 1998). Not all such surveys, however, produce these results (Gallup, 1982; BBC, 2000; Thompson, 2007). This does not necessarily imply that the question asked on the questionnaires was inappropriate or badly framed. The decision to ask it in the form in which it is worded on the questionnaires has been explained in the last chapter (chapter three).

It was interesting to note that proportionally more males (33.8 per cent) than females (30.8 per cent) of the total number of respondents (two did not record their gender) claimed to have had what they considered to be a spiritual experience and there was no obvious distinction between the two groups or themes running through the accounts of these experiences of females as opposed to males as Isherwood (1999) asserts. It has often been thought that women are by nature more inclined towards a religious disposition than men. There is an amusing tradition within Judaism that only males are circumcised as they, unlike women, require a constant reminder of their religious duties and obligations. The outcomes of this research did not indicate that this is the case where 'spirituality' is concerned.

4.3.1 Types of spiritual experience

Most of the participants in this survey who claimed to have had such an experience and were prepared to share the details of this explained it in terms of religion, aesthetic appreciation or some deeply emotional event in their lives. These experiences extended from the almost mystical to the ‘feel good’. They ranged from the awareness of the guiding presence of angels and speaking to spirits to the heightened aesthetic appreciation of beauty and seeing a deeper meaning in everyday and extraordinary events, tragic occurrences and coincidences.

4.3.1.1 Religious experience

Not unexpectedly, for some their spiritual experience was synonymous with a religious experience and one that was usually associated with a particular religious tradition they identified with – more often than not this was Christian. For some it was simply expressed as ‘when I became a Christian I believe I had a spiritual experience’. For others the very fact of being a Christian was in itself a spiritual experience: ‘I am a practising Christian so I am aware of a spiritual leaning in my life’; ‘I don’t like the word “spiritual” because of its ambiguity, but becoming a Christian was due to a calling and response from God and through other people’. Or as another asked rhetorically, ‘isn’t going to church a spiritual experience every time?’ One student wrote of the intrinsic spirituality of the Christian life: ‘as a born-again Christian I have a faith. I am in an active relationship with God and He through His Spirit is always with me’. Another, however, said she was ‘unsure’ whether this really is spiritual experience and wrote: ‘I am a born again Christian and have had experiences of an extreme closeness with God’. For one it was the simple act of praying ‘for my pupils during my day in school’.

Others referred to specific religious ceremonies and rites. For one student it was witnessing a baptism and then being baptised:

I went to Christian camp in Bryntirion for a week between last year in junior school and secondary school. I came home for the weekend and saw a baptism on Sunday which hit me and had an impact which is hard to explain but made me decide to follow the Baptist Christian way. It was overwhelming, even euphoric.

A teacher also referred to 'baptism by total immersion, church services and gatherings' as giving rise to spiritual experiences. Another mentioned an experience which occurred at a church service:

I had not been to church for a number of months when at university - it wasn't cool! It was Easter and I don't know why but I went to Good Friday service; when it came to venerate the cross I was not going to take part - I can't tell why but something made me join the others and as I knelt down to kiss the cross I was overcome with emotion of tears of joy. I have been to mass ever since.

This sense of closeness to God experienced at a religious service is enhanced, or even triggered, by the various factors often associated with worship, such as music and the splendid or even simple surroundings of the buildings. The experience of a greater presence, which some identify as God, in the face of what is seen as wonderful and beautiful extends for many beyond the confines of a place of worship or religious service, yet retains what might be regarded as a form of reverence and adoration. We shall return to this under the sub-heading of *Aesthetic appreciation of beauty and experiencing the spiritual in the commonplace* (4.3.1.3). A teacher illustrates the variety of situations and experiences in which these powerful feelings can occur:

On many occasions - not only within a church I have felt very close to God. As a musician, certain pieces of music can also create an

awareness of spiritual well-being often in unexpected moments. The wonder of creation and nature can cause a person to feel there is a power greater than them.

In the mind of some there was no doubt as to whom or what this presence was: 'I felt that Jesus was in the same room as me. This was at home and was the result of a sermon at my local church'. Another student wrote, 'I personally believe that I had what I consider to be an affirmation of the existence of God, and of Christ. I don't want to go into detail though'.

One student interviewed spoke in detail of her own spiritual experience when she said:

I saw Jesus at the end of the bed. I felt it was Jesus. I was in Gran's bedroom at the time, I had been told to talk to Jesus. I did this and saw Jesus but not with my eyes. I felt terrified, scared, but at the same time there was a feeling of warmth. It felt like His image, like in a film. Therefore it was planted there. I thought I have done this and He has appeared. What do I do now? Should I open my heart and become a Christian? But I didn't want to and felt scared. I closed my eyes and said, "Please go away" and it went and I have never spoken about it. When I look back I am amazed that I didn't feel more about it. I shut it out. I felt scared it exists and was difficult to deal with. I have tried to rationalise it scientifically but can't. It was as real to me as anything. It has convinced me that something is out there.

One student expressed her concern about the possible ramifications of these more 'extreme' experiences citing the case of 'a young boy in *a local school* (my italics; the school where this occurred is named by the student) became very confused about religion and believed he was a messenger from God. It made me realise how influential religion is', which no doubt caused her to consider the dangers of encouraging spiritual experiences in pupils.

Others were more restrained and less inclined to be specific and to commit themselves to this felt presence with responses which were almost tailor made confirmations of Hay's and other's question of the awareness of a presence or 'power'. A student referred to 'a sense that someone or something is watching over me - looking out for me'. One teacher who was 'unsure' whether to class the feelings he had as spiritual wrote that 'unfortunate events seem to be resolved in my favour almost as though there is a spiritual guardian'.

An experience and awareness of a presence sometimes occurred at a moment of crisis or sadness or significant happiness in their lives.

4.3.1.2 Moments of crisis or sadness or significant happiness and spiritual experience

A teacher wrote of feeling a presence after somebody close to her dies. This, she stated, was 'a nice comforting feeling that didn't worry me at all and put me in a better frame of mind'. She expressed feelings of doubt and thought she 'might have imagined it' and how it was 'difficult to quantify' but being 'susceptible to it...had a good result'. One mentioned 'feeling the presence of a family member that had died two days previous'. Another reflected on the positive benefits of the experience saying that, even though she is 'not sure that it is "spiritual"', she experienced 'a sense of growth – spiritually - following a serious and sudden illness. Following this I felt an increased sense of knowledge - more confident of myself and my place in the world'. A secondary school teacher who was interviewed spoke of what she considered to be a spiritual experience when she was seriously ill with meningitis: 'During my illness I heard the doctor say I might die, then looking at the blue sky.

Dying is a lonely business but it is not that bad. In that moment I made a connection with something and was more aware of my mortality'. She went on to agree with the views of Sutherland (1995) that 'death awareness' whilst not a 'comfortable' topic to address in schools is both desirable and possible for she was 'more comfortable as a teenager to talk about these issues' and did talk to her pupils about these matters and explored issues such as 'life after death'. Here we have an example of a particular spiritual experience resulting in a teaching approach for promoting the spiritual development of pupils. The ways in which respondents promote the spiritual development of pupils is discussed in more detail in this chapter under the subheading *Strategies used to promote the spiritual development of pupils* (4.7).

For others it was not only the anxiety and worry they experienced during moments of crisis and sadness but the fact that the response they felt they received during these times provided them with a source of strength which enabled them to cope with the situation. As one teacher wrote:

In a time of extreme anxiety and distress - illness of a close family member - I went to pray and knew after the time spent in prayer that the ill person would recover and it was not his time to die. A feeling of comfort and a knowledge of what I could expect gave me a positive outlook and the means to cope with the difficult future, with the traumas of recovery, set backs and success.

Another student referred to:

The circumstances surrounding my Mum's death refocused and confirmed all my thoughts on all things spiritual. An unmistakeable sense of inner strength helped me deal with the events at the time and has remained with me. So strong was the sense of spiritual experience that I reconfirmed my commitment to my religious faith and continue in a sense of strength through spirituality.

Others experienced the not altogether unusual phenomenon of communicating with the dead and sometimes seeing them. This ranged from the impressionistic to what the recipients saw as tangible visualisations. One wrote: 'after the death of a friend I got the impression they said goodbye to me'. Another said, 'after my mother died I would hold conversations with her whilst she helped me come to terms with her death and changes in my life'. Another revealed how, 'when my brother committed suicide, I saw him as a spirit myself'. Another referred to 'when our small black kitten got run over I still used to see him walking around the house and somehow I know he is OK and watching us. It was at home'. It is the cathartic effect of the experiences rather than their veracity which concerns us here.

For some the spiritual experience was the result of direct involvement with people and activities designed to foster spiritual experience. Some aspects of these responses might be considered the paranormal end of the spectrum of spiritual experiences and a step beyond the more plausible comment given by one student who wrote about 'spiritual experience - the ability to come through a difficult situation as a stronger person, using a bad situation as a learning curve and coming out as a stronger and more confident person'.

There was one who mentioned being 'woken by a Blue Light. My mother's sister died suddenly about the same time. I was very close to her'. Another wrote:

I believe spiritual experience to be seeing a spirit. Also when I was four years old I saw and spoke to a young girl named Charlotte at our old house. It was haunted by a young girl. Also meeting somebody and believing you have known them for all of your life is very spiritual.

A student said she had ‘seen and felt a ghost in a pub I used to work in - felt someone touch my neck when no one was there and I saw a woman in black dress for which there is no explanation’. ‘I’ve been to a spiritual church, seen spirits, I can feel a presence’ claimed one student. Another mentioned ‘having mediums in the family’, whilst another said, ‘I come from a “spiritually aware” family. Since my teens meditation and time to reflect have been all around me although I have not always been actively involved’. Another claimed that she not only sensed a presence in her life but had ‘seen things – visions’, one being the spirit of a girl who had died. One student referred to a near death experience and another an out-of-the-body experience.

A teacher told of her spiritual experience which combines times of stress with those of the comfort of a religious experience and would be equally well placed under the sub-heading ‘religious experience’:

During troubled times (my husband lost his business, had a nervous breakdown. I had no income and was at risk of losing our home) I went to Church with a friend. I wasn’t confirmed but went up to the altar during the Eucharist to have a blessing. As the minister put his hand on my head I felt this overwhelming calmness replace all anguish and worry inside me. It’s difficult to put into words but the weight of my worries was lifted out of my body. I knew from that point on that I was not facing this on my own and that as long as my family were safe and well, the material things didn’t matter. I became a different person and took control of our situation and coped. I became the strong one in the family and dealt with all the ‘business’ until my husband was well again.

A sense of the spiritual not only occurred for some during times of sadness in their lives but also times of happiness. One stated that ‘giving birth to both my children was a very uplifting, emotional and spiritual experience, but not in a religious sense’. A similar response from another was, ‘I feel getting married and

giving birth have all been intense spiritual experiences but not in a religious way'. One mentioned both times of happiness and distress: 'Marriage - love makes you, or at least made me thankful to God. Birth of child - I felt that is what it was all about - true love, a true miracle. Divorce - all that I could do was pray for help to get me through the next day, for courage and hope and somehow I overcame (but did not completely rid myself of grief)'.

4.3.1.3 Aesthetic appreciation of beauty and experiencing the spiritual in the commonplace

For others it was a result of aesthetic appreciation of beauty as witnessed in nature and music. One referred to this appreciation of beauty when he wrote 'I have experienced moments of bliss, mixed with extreme humility when subjected to great natural phenomena - a beautiful sunset, the Grand Canyon, the rainforest etc.'. Another spoke of 'sitting by a lake after climbing Ben Nevis - shattered but having achieved a personal goal - good environment and listening to music'. Most, if not all, of us are moved in the presence of the beauty and grandeur of nature and have an emotive response to certain pieces of music but we do not necessarily refer to these as 'spiritual experiences'. Thus, as one student put it, 'I have not had what I would class as a spiritual experience. However sometimes I have moments where I am suddenly struck by the importance and beauty of life and what it means to be alive'. This is similar to what Maslow (1964) referred to as a 'peak experience'. An example is found in the comments of one student whose response to the question whether or not they had had a 'spiritual experience' was: 'No, though I've had several, sometimes resulting from the commonplace. Ramakrishna attained enlightenment from seeing a flock of white egrets flying in front of a black storm cloud. I saw a beautiful rainbow

crossing the M4 on the drive home tonight - that was spiritual'. Much depends on the way in which the individual interprets the experience. It is a case of what Wittgenstein (1983, p.193) referred to as "seeing as" and Hick as "experiencing as" (Hick, 1963, pp.71-72). Those with the inclination to do so will "see" or "experience" events and actions in a spiritual way, both confirming and contributing to their own spiritual nature and development. Equally there are those who will not. As a student put it, 'Surely it can't be classed as a single experience? It is ongoing awareness with various moments of heightened clarity'. One teacher was clearly inclined to reflect on a range of experiences and often see the spiritual in the commonplace whilst at the same time revealing the reluctance to talk about such matters for fear of ridicule:

I consider many simple moments in my life to be spiritual. I find peace and beauty in my children. Everything in the world that I look at and just stand in wonder at its beauty. At a difficult time in my life I felt the presence of a being that came to me and touched me as though to protect and comfort. I find a great joy in my role as teacher and consider the whole experience to be greatly spiritual. The recent death of my grandfather as I sat with him during the last few hours of his life - the images and feelings. I rarely speak of these things they are intensely private yet probably shared by many.

Another teacher wrote how he was 'occasionally overwhelmed by - the loving presence of God - the interrelatedness and beauty of creation - the power of love'. For one student 'each day is a "spiritual experience" being actively involved in the growth of a pupil is very spiritual.' A teacher wrote: 'I am often moved by things I see and do: viewing a painting at first hand; seeing a pupil's response; visiting places that evoke the feelings of spirituality; contemplating one's own thoughts and feelings'. A student also referred to a range of different experiences; notably 'literature (reading particular texts), watching films, history and visits abroad to World War Two sites and memorials'.

For others also, it was a particular location or building which had perceived spiritual associations and properties. 'In the ruins at Glastonbury at 6:30 a.m. in the morning staring at the hawthorn tree I felt at peace. Also in St David's Cathedral in the little room which allegedly holds St David's bones I felt an overwhelming sense of peace (and pride!!)'. An occasion when 'I was at Wembley for Wales 32-31 victory against England and Tom Jones signed my ticket' was even regarded as a 'spiritual experience' by one teacher. Here it appears as if any emotionally charged situation may be classed as 'spiritual'. Sometimes even life's inevitable coincidences are seen as 'spiritually' significant:

I remember going into a shoe shop and asking if they had a particular pair in size 6. I was told no, they'd all been sold but there was a pair that had been put by for someone. She said she would check the size. She returned with said pair of shoes which had been put under the name of Susan Smith. Now that's pretty spooky!! and true! (*The name of the respondent has been changed*).

The teacher (whose name was the same as the person for whom the shoes were reserved) who included this comment did, however, indicate that she was 'unsure' whether this should be regarded as a 'spiritual experience'. In many ways it is an example of synchronicity, a term coined by Jung (1973) to refer to the acausal connecting principle that gives meaning to a series of coincidences. What this does illustrate is how 'spiritual experiences' manifest themselves in many and varied guises. The responses of teachers and students are not atypical of those documented by Hardy (1979) and others who have researched this field. It is not the intention here to embark upon a detailed classification of the various elements found in these accounts of spiritual experience as Hardy (1979, pp.25-30) did in his research other than to say that practically all the areas referred to by him are to be found somewhere in these testimonies. The sensory and quasi-sensory experiences include, as do

Hardy's, visions, feelings of unity, auditory sensations of voices, *déjà vu*, feelings of warmth and comfort, music, and being guided. There are instances of extra-sensory perception with supposed contact with the dead. Cognitive and affective elements include a sense of joy, well-being, security and peace, inspiration, feelings of love and a sense of presence. Experiences which contribute to the growth of a sense of awareness form part of what Hardy (1979, p.27) refers to as 'development of experience'. Also included under this heading is 'development through contact with literature or the arts' (Hardy, 1979, p.27).

A student on a PGCE Art course provided a good example of this 'development' through an encounter with art, recounting an experience she had whilst visiting a Rothko exhibition at the Tate as part of her GCSE course in school. On entering the 'Rothko room in the Tate' she said:

I felt something in the room with me. I felt the paintings were floating towards me. When I described these experiences back in school I found the others felt the same. We found ourselves whispering in the room and felt a being or higher force in the room. I realised I was connected with a higher force, as I saw when watching *2001 A Space Odyssey* – it struck a chord. It was almost a religious experience.

Later in the interview she said that 'Rothko was known as a religious, spiritual painter and was commissioned by the Church. He says little about this and committed suicide. He (*Rothko*) was overawed by them (*his paintings*) and overcome by the insignificance at what he had created. Spirituality can be the opposite of life affirming and lead to disillusionment and insignificance'. Two other relevant points were made during this interview. One was the need for some kind of verification of the authenticity of the experience, a point we emphasised in the review of literature as being one of the means of appraising the value of the experience:

The spiritual has to be a personal experience but to give it merit you have to measure it against outside criteria. Otherwise I think I am strange. You need to compare with others and see if they had the experience. I am the opposite to (*sic*) sceptical but too open to suggestion. When I hear of the experiences of others I wish I had seen this. Even though the experience is in the mind it is still real like hearing voices – schizophrenia. There cannot be such a thing as a false spiritual experience. If it is in the head the seed must have been placed by an external source.

Not only are many of the descriptions of spiritual experience similar to those given to Hardy and found in his *The Spiritual Nature of Man* (1979) but so are the triggers that give rise to such experiences. The first three in his list of twenty-one triggers of a spiritual experience (these are listed in chapter two) are ‘depression and despair’, ‘prayer and meditation’ and ‘natural beauty’. These, along with others, were the principal ones referred to by students and teachers.

It is not the intention of this research to determine whether or not the experiences related are the hallucinatory delusions of the mind or genuine encounters with a higher source. All the experiences listed above prove is that these experiences happen. Even though this is somewhat of a tautological comment the recipients of these experiences clearly cannot ignore what they feel. As Unamuno (1954, p.117) stated ‘what I feel is a truth, at any rate as much truth as I can see, touch or hear, or what is demonstrated to me – nay, I believe it is more of a truth – and sincerity obliges me not to hide what I feel’. Subjective experience is as real and important (often more so) as any objective entity, even though it may not constitute strictly objective cognition. These feelings of purpose and heightened awareness and of living in the presence of a higher power are not necessarily some kind of mental aberrations to be ignored for they are common enough to people to be regarded as part of human experience that is communicable though the universal language we often call spiritual and/or religious.

Here we have adopted a position similar to that of Erricker *et al.* (1997) with all the inherent dangers of an idiosyncratic spirituality but balanced by the criteria we referred to in chapter two for evaluating these experiences, namely reason, shared objective reality and morality.

4.4 Spiritual experiences in school

We are specifically looking at the place of the spiritual development of pupils in schools and the role of the teacher (or potential teacher) in promoting this development. While not meticulously examining the veracity of the comments of those who were prepared to share their experiences with us, we do need to discover the correlation, if any, between ‘spiritual experiences’ and the attitude of teachers and students towards providing opportunities for spiritual development in schools. Also we need to discover if any of the experiences described above, or indeed any that the recipient might describe as spiritual, occur in school time or as a result of something that happened in school. Robinson (1977) has shown how experiences classed as spiritual are remembered into adulthood, even though they may have occurred when a child does not possess the ability to articulate such experiences.

Should schools be in the business of facilitating spiritual experiences? Rather they should be providing opportunities for spiritual development to take place (Ofsted, 2004; Estyn, 2004). The two are not the same. There is a distinction, however interrelated, between process and product. A spiritual person may or may not have had a spiritual experience at the more ‘extreme’ or mystical end of the scale. Again it comes down to definitions. It is not really the function of the teacher or the school to ‘create’ spiritual experiences, certainly not like some of those described

above. It is extremely doubtful that any community or even 'faith' school would be comfortable with situations similar to that of the 'young boy' who 'became very confused about religion and believed he was a messenger from God' as mentioned earlier by one student. As such, it should not come as any surprise that the answer was a resounding 'no' to the question whether a spiritual experience had occurred while at school. Only five respondents claimed that it had and, of these, only one had an experience which was palpably spiritual. This was an 'out of the body experience in a meditation session' organised in school at the time of A levels in order to 'de-stress pupils'. One student mentioned praying for pupils during the school day which he identified as a spiritual experience, whilst another wrote of the very activity of teaching and 'being involved in the growth of pupils' as being 'very spiritual'. The other responses from students were not really descriptions of spiritual experiences but rather comments which might be hinting at but certainly not describing a spiritual experience. One said 'most classes I observed had children from many religions, e.g. Hindu, Muslim, Christian' and for the other the fact that she had spent ten years in a Catholic school had a positive impact on her spiritual development. One said, that 'school was probably the last place it (*a spiritual experience*) would happen'. We are left to draw our own conclusions about exactly what is meant by these remarks.

Before we do this it is worth commenting on the responses given by students when they were presented with a range of subjects and aspects of school life and asked whether these had helped or hindered what they considered to be their spiritual development.

4.4.1 The curriculum, school life and spiritual development

The students were presented with a range of subjects and aspects of school life and asked on the questionnaire whether these had helped or hindered what they considered to be their own spiritual development. Not all subjects were taken by all of those who responded (for example Welsh was only taken by those who had attended schools in Wales). Nevertheless the responses gathered provide some indication as to the identified areas which have a positive and negative influence on spiritual development (see below: Table III). Three areas stand out as being helpful. These are religious education (57 per cent), assemblies (40.4 per cent) and relationships with friends (49.7 per cent). Why do religious education and assemblies stand out from other areas? Is it because of the traditional associations between spirituality, religion and worship? Both are areas to which inspectors are guided to enable them to form a judgement on the state of opportunities for spiritual development within schools, and assemblies are often mentioned in the annual reports of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools in Wales. If this is the case we might even regard this as surprising, especially when, as we have seen, the vast majority do not believe that you need to be religious to be spiritual. Then again, perhaps not, as religious education is not meant to be confessional but rather an exploration of religion and the questions which arise from this study. Assemblies on the other hand are more controversial as they involve acts of collective worship and inspection evidence suggests that despite the legal requirement for a daily act of collective worship the majority of secondary schools fail to comply with this (DES, 2004, p.5). The key word here, however, is 'collective' rather than 'corporate' as the former indicates a gathering of people where worship is taking place but not all present are active participants, whereas 'corporate worship' refers to a group of people engaging in worship together. It is more likely that

religious education and assemblies appear where they do in the table for their explicit consideration of matters spiritual.

Almost a third of those questioned point towards English (32.2 per cent) and history (31.5 per cent) as having helped. Subjects such as art, drama and music (29.4 per cent; 27.8 per cent and 27.3 per cent respectively), often regarded as developing pupils' creative skills, were deemed to be supportive of spiritual development, though one music student thought 'it is hard to teach this aspect through music'. An area of the curriculum which is aimed explicitly at developing the personal and social skills of pupils, namely PSE or PSHE, and provides regular opportunities for discussion and debate on topical issues, was found helpful by just over 30 per cent of respondents. There does appear to be some evidence which adds weight to the view of Carr (1995) that spirituality in schools is best approached through the discussion of 'spiritual truths' and traditions in religious education, literature and the creative arts. It is, as one student put it, 'the subjects which allow you to express yourself which have helped' where 'ideas are brought forward and not forced upon you' as another said. For one student it was about 'respecting views and ideas'.

Table III: Curriculum subjects and aspects of school life in order of priority which 'helped' spiritual development (based on 428 student responses).

Curriculum Subjects and School Life	Helped
Religious Education	244
Relationships with Friends	213
Assemblies	173
Relationships with Teachers	160
Charity Work	155

English	138
History	135
Personal and Social Education	131
Guest Speakers	130
Art	126
School Visits/Field Trips	121
Drama	119
Music	117
Clubs and Societies	101
Science	82
Geography	57
Physical Education	45
Work Experience	42
Welsh	41
Modern Foreign Languages	30
Mathematics	20
Information Technology	16
Design Technology	10

Table IV: Curriculum subjects and aspects of school life in order of priority which ‘hindered’ spiritual development (based on 428 student responses).

Curriculum Subjects and School Life	Hindered
Science	35
Assemblies	30
Religious Education	30

Mathematics	20
Physical Education	17
Guest Speakers	15
Personal and Social Education	12
Relationships with Teachers	12
History	11
Modern Foreign Languages	11
Relationships with Friends	11
Design Technology	10
English	10
Geography	10
Charity Work	9
Information Technology	8
Music	7
School Visits/Field Trips	7
Art	6
Welsh	6
Clubs and Societies	5
Drama	3
Work Experience	3

The opportunity to explore issues in a free and non-judgemental environment is not necessarily intrinsic to the subject but often dependent upon the approach and teaching strategies employed by the teacher. Subjects which are considered to have been of assistance to some pupils' spiritual development are also deemed to have had

a negative effect on others. Thus, whilst many regarded religious education, with its investigation of different religions and reflection on ‘ultimate questions’ as being helpful to their spiritual development, encouraging pupils to appreciate how ‘other people think’, others felt it hindered or even threatened this development. One student said, ‘I feel religious education confused my initially Christian beliefs, as I believe that spirituality is closely linked with religious beliefs’. During an interview one PGCE art student gave her views on her experience of religious education lessons and other subjects touching upon a number of matters raised by other respondents, as such it is worth quoting at length. She spoke of how she:

had an RE teacher who talked about religion and tried to make us all born again Christians and was ready to perform the ritual. He tried to transfer his experience. He described an intense religious experience. This scared me slightly. It had a negative impact as I felt uncomfortable and was wary of it. I had a book about schizophrenia in GCSE psychology, though I didn’t finish it, it made me think about signs and God speaking to you and I became confused about those who claim God is speaking to them. I was fifteen at the time. School didn’t really help except perhaps for art and English ... In English at A level we studied transcendentalism and this struck a chord – being insignificant in the scheme of things. School can foster this by helping pupils to reflect. A Church school should make a difference but it is worrying they only learn Christianity and this could harbour racism. ... Spirituality should be taught. A lot of people would be open to it if taught, for example, other religions. I am in favour of timetabled lessons but there must be some guidance. I did it unaided but I am more open to art. Creativity is a form of spirituality. Definitely some subjects are more spiritual than others, such as English and music. The inspiration of the teacher is important. Science, maths and physics will question beliefs and offer alternatives, though physics does look at the wonder of nature. PE is not spiritual as I didn’t have a good experience. To believe in the body and its achievements is more insular and takes away from the force. Schools should have a lasting impact.

Here we see how not only the nature of the subject and the subject matter covered in the syllabus may contribute to a pupil’s spiritual development or perhaps we should say ‘spiritual awareness’ (one student did state that he thought the words ‘made aware’ were preferable to ‘helped’). It also illustrates how much depends on

the attitude, approach and teaching strategies employed by the teacher and, of course, the receptiveness of the pupil. To some extent there was a correlation between the subjects the respondents enjoyed and/or excelled in (and, in many cases, went on to specialise in and eventually teach) and the positive impact these subjects had on their own spiritual development, but this was variable. For example, almost 66 per cent of those specialising in drama considered the subject helpful to their spiritual development whilst at school, whereas only just over 45 per cent and 31 per cent of those specialising in English and history respectively thought the same. Only just over 22 per cent of those students who considered science to be helpful were specialising in that subject with the majority of the others being on a range of specialist subject courses. There were, for example, only two female students specialising in science who believed that the subject had hindered their spiritual development.

It may be that asking students to identify specific subjects and areas of school life which either helped or hindered their spiritual development is somewhat of an unfair request for, as one student said, 'it is difficult to say either way as subjects are so broad that some parts helped, others didn't'. One said she thought they all made a contribution in some way and 'had relevance' and another stated that 'every experience offers something to your personality, attitudes, behaviour' whereas a different student wrote that 'in general' he 'didn't see much overlap between the spiritual and school'. One categorically stated, that 'I don't feel school has any bearing on a pupil's sense of spirituality nor should it be the school's rule (*sic.* role)'.

There were some who appeared to confuse 'spiritual development' with that which makes you feel good about yourself and the world and thus point to those

subjects, or rather aspects of subjects, which reveal the darker side of life and acts of inhumanity as having hindered their spiritual development. History especially fell into this category with comments such as:

‘The more you learn about humanity’s savagery the more you sense there is a common design or fate for us all’.

‘History may hinder beliefs when studying some of the atrocities of the past e.g. Auschwitz’.

‘Certainly NOT history as this would show some of the historical religious parasites in their full glory e.g. Popes etc.’.

This last comment shows a not untypical blurring of the spiritual with the religious.

One respondent, however, took the opposite view and considered ‘learning about the Holocaust and concentration camps’ was helping her spiritual development. This last comment is compatible with the view that spiritual development and spiritual experiences often emanate from what we referred to earlier as moments of sadness and crisis. Indeed one of the three universal truths of Buddhism is the notion that all life is suffering and thus lies at the heart of Buddhist spirituality. There were those who through their encounter with the suffering of others mentioned how these experiences contributed to their own spiritual development whilst at school. For example, one referred to her work experience with children with disabilities and another to work experience at a boarding school for children with special needs. One wrote of going to Lourdes as a youth helper. These, along with other extra curricular activities, were cited by respondents. One appreciated guest speakers coming in to lecture on issues which had personally affected them, whilst others referred to time in the playground rather than lessons and of being enriched by others, both friends and

teachers. This relationship with friends is perhaps more understandable, for our interaction with others to a large extent determines who we are. Hay and Nye (1998) define the essence of spirituality as 'relational consciousness' and Archbishop Rowan Williams (1997) argues that spirituality has everything to do with community and the self in relation to others, the world and God.

Respondents were not as forthcoming about subjects and areas which hindered their spiritual development. Those who did comment referred to subjects which in their view challenged the teachings of religion such as the 'Big Bang' theory in science and times in school when they felt they were subjected to 'oppressive' and one-sided views, especially in school assemblies and religious education lessons.

The students were basing their responses on past experiences, most of which were fairly recent. These same students were in the process of role reversal, training to become the teachers of the future. They, along with those currently in the profession who formed part of this survey, were now the ones charged with the responsibility of implementing the statutory requirement to promote the spiritual development of pupils and provide opportunities for this to take place. How did they see this aspect of their role and responsibility? Were they supportive and in agreement with this legislative requirement and, more importantly what, if any, were the practical measures they used to ensure its implementation?

4.5 Spiritual development of pupils

What did the spiritual development of pupils mean to students and teachers?

Here there were obvious links with their own definitions of spirituality. It was seen in terms of:

- (i) exposing pupils to different views – religious, moral principles, philosophies;
- (ii) allowing them the freedom to make their own decisions about the principles they adopt without any form of indoctrination;
- (iii) encouraging them to have the capacity to act upon their principles, for example confidence, authenticity; and
- (iv) enabling them to reflect, question and look deeply at the world of which they find themselves a part.

These points were clearly connected to students' and teachers' perceptions of 'spirituality' which were seen as a set of principles which guide and add depth to life; whose source was religion, personal philosophy, moral values, relationships and a heightened awareness of life and the world. Inherent within the categories on which these principles are based are: an exploration and understanding of faith and beliefs; being in touch with one's inner thoughts and feelings and refining strategies to nurture the 'inner self'; becoming a good, caring and compassionate person; fostering and valuing positive relationships, respecting difference and recognising similarities; and being reflective and developing a fresh perspective on life and the world. This entails having an open mind about things where the focus is more on process than on answers and solutions. The essences of the four aspects of 'spiritual development' listed above reflect teachers' and students' perceptions of spirituality, in this sample,

in as much as they attempt to reproduce these positive features through educational procedures and teaching methodology.

4.5.1 Exposing pupils to different views

It was believed that teachers who wished to promote spiritual development should permit their pupils to come into contact with as many religious, moral and philosophic doctrines as possible. In the main, the comments focused upon the exploration of a variety of religious beliefs and traditions, as expressed by one student when he wrote of ‘making pupils aware of beliefs and other beliefs outside of their own and also the opportunity to express their beliefs.’ Another referred to ‘increased awareness of other faiths and practices’ and a third of ‘knowledge and understanding of different beliefs and cultures’. ‘Developing them as pupils to have a wide knowledge of beliefs, philosophies and be able to express them’ was how one student put it. One teacher said ‘spiritual development’ is ‘to encourage pupils to empathise/consider moral, ethical, religious constructs as part of a pupil's growth that illustrates maturity’. A student wrote of ‘enlightening them on religion and getting them to understand a little bit more’, whilst another referred to ‘hearing about different religious and spiritual backgrounds’. A teacher in a Catholic school said it involved ‘the actual teaching of religion, personal and comparative, to give pupils a background and help develop a moral stance from which to view the world and society’.

Earlier in this chapter we argued that spirituality was generally seen as a set of principles guiding life and that the source of these principles could be moral. The cross-over between spiritual and moral development was evident in the responses of

some. There were those, however, who felt more at ease addressing the latter and there were some who explicitly stated that they had no difficulty in accepting their responsibility to foster the moral development of pupils, but as far as 'spiritual development' was concerned it was outside their 'comfort zone' and therefore inappropriate as far as they were concerned. The link between the spiritual and moral for them was not as obvious as it was for others. One student wrote, 'I consider myself responsible to develop pupils' morality but have never considered their spirituality' and another 'I consider it my role to foster moral development. I believe the two are often confused'. As one put it, 'spiritual development' means 'making them aware how important it is to be a good person. There is an alternative to directing all one's efforts towards materialism and the accumulation of wealth. Spiritual development should be the road to this enlightenment'. Another referred to 'developing moral values in relation to self and society' and another to the role of 'spiritual development' in nourishing pupils' moral development. One student said it was about the 'development of conscience and a moral attitude towards others and life'. Some envisaged this being promoted through charitable activities and voluntary work as part of the pupils' school experience. Above all, it was getting pupils 'to think about moral and ethical issues with the course' they were following.

One student who involved himself in the Christian Union in the school saw 'spiritual development' as an 'aid in the development of pupils in their moral relationships with others and God'. There were others who also referred to 'developing a relationship with God' in addition to 'developing a moral framework'. One student spoke of 'seeking to "teach" pupils about God and what it means to live according to his will'. Another thought 'spiritual development' proceeded according

to 'God's will'. This hint of confessionalism was by and large not mirrored in the majority of responses but rather the predominant view was that indoctrination had no role to play in spiritual development. 'As a teacher you should offer all ranges but should not preach one in particular' was the way one student expressed it.

4.5.2 Allowing pupils the freedom to make their own decisions

From their contact with different religions and moral and philosophic doctrines in school pupils should be allowed to formulate their own set of principles was the view of the majority of respondents. More importantly, these pupils should be free to decide the principles they select for, as stated above, indoctrination has no role to play within spiritual development. Thus reference was made to the importance of 'encouraging pupils to *consider* moral, ethical and religious constructs' (my italics), of bringing about 'awareness of the religious world and seeing how it can apply to them', of 'providing information to help pupils decide their own views and opinions on life' and of 'giving students the opportunity to make their own judgements'. As one student put it, pupils' 'spiritual development' is to allow pupils 'to become aware of their personal spiritual belief without pressure from outside forces. So they make up their own minds'. One student wrote that it involved not only the development of pupils' morals but also 'developing them as pupils to have a wide knowledge of beliefs, philosophies and the ability to express them'. Another said 'pupils should be given the choice of developing their own self belief with the help of a teacher giving them a whole range of thoughts and options to choose'. This said another, entailed 'helping them find their way to their own decisions about religion'. These pupils' choices were not purely arbitrary but rather based on knowledge and understanding which came partly from their time at school. One student said that by providing pupils

with information their decision making capabilities were developed. Thus, part of the responsibility of the teacher is not only to make available information on these matters but also to provide opportunities for, and an environment in which, pupils are able to express their views and beliefs. One student referred to this as ‘guidance in certain life decisions’. This was succinctly expressed by a student when she said spiritual development meant ‘making pupils aware of beliefs and other beliefs outside of their own and also the opportunity to express their beliefs’. Thus, ‘promotion of tolerance of others’ and respect are attitudes to be encouraged by teachers. In such a learning environment we will see, according to one student, the ‘development of pupils’ various beliefs and increasing awareness of other pupils’ beliefs’.

From this process pupils could then ‘delve into profound issues of beliefs and personal identity’ and ‘learn more about themselves and what they believe’ sated one student. Much of this mirrors the inclusive nature of spiritual development given in the official guidance and what is considered to be part of the aims of good religious education.

4.5.3 Encouraging pupils to have the capacity to act upon their principles

Thirdly, it was suggested that teachers who wished to promote their pupils’ spirituality should encourage them to acquire the disposition to act upon the principles they adopt. Again, we have a clear connection with teachers’ and students’ own perception of ‘spirituality’. In the view of one student, pupils should be allowed to reflect upon their own ideas, feeling, and beliefs and to express those ideas ‘without feeling ashamed or embarrassed’. This involves ‘trying to produce awareness of the spiritual and religious world and see how it can apply to them’ such

as 'looking at examples of human endeavour motivated by a sense of spiritual awareness' and 'encouraging children to consider the way they feel and the way they react to situations and ideas'. The consequence of this approach is to enable pupils 'to connect with their inner self and grow in self-confidence'. One referred to 'improving the confidence of pupils so that they are happy with themselves' and another to enhancing 'self confidence and inner strength'. Thus, said another, 'spiritual development means they learn more about themselves and what they believe'. It involves 'self-examination' and should give them 'an insight into what inspires them' and allow them to 'focus on the best path that they want to take in life'. One saw the link between this and 'emotional development' and another referred to it as all part of 'developing pupils' character'. One teacher spoke of providing pupils with 'coping strategies' to deal with 'the difficult situations which may arise in their lives'.

Whether the acquisition of these traits in pupils 'allows them to be at peace with themselves' is open to debate. Nevertheless one can see 'how pupils move on or make decisions as a result of what they have been taught/informed or considered - about their own spirituality/feelings' as one student put it. A teacher summed it up by saying:

To me this means encouraging pupils to examine themselves, their beliefs about themselves and others and encourage them to think originally so as to develop thoughts and ideas that are true and purposeful for them as individuals: this will help them grow as people.

The encouraging of pupils to act on their principles is all 'part of a pupil's growth that illustrates maturity' according to one teacher. A natural contributor and corollary of self understanding is an awareness of the world in which they find

themselves. A student referred to spiritual development as ‘helping pupils to become aware of themselves and aware of more than themselves’.

4.5.4 Enabling them to reflect, question and look deeply at the world of which they find themselves a part

Many respondents saw ‘spiritual development’ in schools as nurturing an inquisitive and reflective disposition in the pupils which, yet again, reflects teachers’ and students’ own perceptions of the nature of ‘spirituality’. This entails ‘encouraging their awareness of the world around them and to appreciate the beauty it holds’; ‘getting pupils to believe in themselves and having greater understanding of nature and the universe’, ‘allowing pupils to reflect upon meaningful questions, purpose of life, mysteries of life’ and ‘encouraging of awaking of some depth within a pupil - search within and relate it to our natural world and humanity’. It is about ‘helping pupils understand their place in the world’, helping them acquire ‘a sense of themselves, their purpose in the world and a sense of connecting with others and nature’ and providing a ‘safe space’ to explore these matters and express their thoughts. This means ‘moving towards discussing the great questions about humanity: why are we here etc.’ and ‘developing pupils’ awareness of the greater import (*significance*) of life, looking at spirituality in their everyday lives and how it can benefit them’. Teachers should ‘engage pupils with the ability to reason/question their own beliefs and place within a whole world context’. ‘It is the way pupils develop an awareness about their own existence and also their existence in relation to others’. One student said ‘spiritual development’ was for pupils ‘to develop their awareness of themselves and those around them, to enable them to explore higher meanings of life and to consider/develop aspirations outside of the mundane’.

Through this process the teacher will 'help them deal with situations that trouble them' and search 'for deeper meanings to things'. Words which were often used when referring to this process were 'nurturing' and 'encouraging', which indicates a facilitation of spiritual development rather than a didactic approach. 'To engage children in thinking outside of their immediate environment' was the way one student put it and another of 'being open to other possibilities'. A teacher referred to giving pupils 'a sense of themselves, their purpose in the world and a sense of connecting with others and nature' and a student to 'encouraging pupils to ask questions on all aspects of life'. As with Zohar and Marshall (2000, p.196) this involves asking 'why', hence considering the 'big picture' as opposed to views based on limited (blinkered) experiences. Such an approach develops 'pupils into creatures who understand the complexities and anomalies of life'.

Some saw it as almost a duty 'to foster this love of our world, the different environments that we hold in trust for our children and to treat others as we would wish them to treat us'. An appreciation of the good things in life and the world, said another, meant that pupils should be 'thankful for all the beautiful things around them' and be 'able to notice certain things such as a sunset as being beautiful'. One teacher saw this as 'fostering pupils' sense of awe and wonder'.

There were a small number of comments of dubious and for some, educationally questionable, interpretations of what the spiritual development of pupils entails, such as 'the development of pupils' telepathic ability' and the more uncertain 'to acknowledge that there are other life forms and to open the children's eyes to supernatural experiences'. These were very much minority comments as were the

more esoteric views such as ‘improving pupils’ awareness of themselves and others in terms of their soul and as a collective force/living body’.

There were those who accepted many of the general, more acceptable educational principles listed above (4.5.1.-4.5.4), but refused to call this spiritual development. Typical of this view was the response by one student who wrote, ‘I believe that pupils cannot be taught how to develop spiritually or indeed gain it in the first place. However, I do believe that every form of education and life experience can help a person be more aware of the gift of life’.

If we accept this interpretation of what the spiritual development of pupils means, we must next consider the extent to which students and teachers agree with the statutory requirement to address this area and, more importantly, any practical measures they actually take to apply this legislation. Consequently, they were asked two key questions:

- (i) Do you consider it to be part of your role to foster the spiritual development of pupils? and
- (ii) Do you consciously plan opportunities for pupils to experience spiritual development in school in your lesson plans?

4.6 The role of the teacher in the spiritual development of pupils

4.6.1 Professional responsibility to foster the spiritual development of pupils

Do students on courses of initial teacher education and training and qualified teachers believe it to be part of their function to foster the spiritual development of

pupils? It was apparent that more teachers (71 per cent) than students (39 per cent) felt this was one of their professional responsibilities (this rose to 41.6 per cent for those students who attended a faith school). A larger percentage of students (34 per cent) than teachers (17 per cent) were unsure about their role in this area. Twelve per cent of teachers and 25 per cent of students indicated that they did not consider the spiritual development of pupils to be part of their role.

4.6.2 Planning learning opportunities for the spiritual development for pupils

When it came to the application of these views to actual planning and delivery there was a marked fall in numbers in those who said they did incorporate ‘spiritual development’ into their lesson plans and lessons. Thirty nine per cent of teachers and just over 7 per cent of students responded in the affirmative. Just over 53 per cent of teachers and almost 70 per cent of students admitted that such planning and provision of opportunities for pupils played no part in their teaching (interestingly this rose to just over 72 per cent of students who had attended a faith school) whilst nearly 8 per cent of teachers and 18 per cent of students said they were ‘unsure’ whether or not they actually promoted spiritual development in their lessons. If they did it was unplanned and incidental, or as one student put it ‘it could be included in a lesson by mishap’.

Several reasons may be assumed to explain these differences. Possibly a larger number of teachers than students understood the requirements of Education Acts and, as experienced teachers, they were fully aware that during inspections their schools were judged on their capacity to promote the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of their pupils. Thus, some teachers indicated it was primarily an

awareness of their legal responsibilities. With a minority of others it was the fact that they taught in a faith school which prioritised the spiritual development of pupils as an important aspect of its ethos. Furthermore, students are still in the process of training to become teachers and their first concern is to master the basic knowledge and skills needed to deliver their discipline within the National Curriculum. The students who thought it important did so because it was part of what constitutes a complete person and part of teaching children how to live fulfilled lives and understand the world in which they live. For some it was unavoidable and it was believed that teachers might as well 'bite the bullet' of spirituality (Beesley, 1990).

4.6.3 Age and gender related to responsibility and attitude

Is it the case that the older one grows the more confident one is in regarding matters spiritual (McCreery, 2001)? Just over 46 per cent of those teachers who believed it was part of their role to foster the spiritual development of pupils had taught for ten years or longer. Then, again, 24 per cent of those who also said 'yes' to this question had been teaching for five years or less. Sixty-eight per cent of those teachers who had been teaching for ten years or more said they either did not consider it to be part of their role or were 'unsure'. Given these statistics, backed up by the interviews, there is insufficient evidence to confirm McCreery's (2001, p.13) claim that with maturity comes a more positive stance on spirituality in schools. Indeed, if we admit the proximity between religious development and spiritual development (something we have not fully subscribed to and which the vast majority of respondents did not accept as necessary for spiritual development to take place), the evidence is inconclusive regarding whether there is increased religiosity, along with

the supposed richer appreciation of the meaning and purpose it imparts to the life of the person concerned, with the aging process. Coleman (2005) and Fletcher (2004) have shown how life meaning may come through social and secular interactions when religious belief is either absent or insufficient. What Coleman did discover was that even though women outnumber men as religious practitioners in later life there is some evidence to suggest some gender cross-over effects with advanced age, 'with men becoming more receptive to belief and women more sceptical' (Coleman, 2005, p.319). Thomas a Kempis, or whoever the author of fifteenth century *The Imitation of Christ* was, argued that all longevity of life imparts is the accumulation of sin and not necessarily a more refined and developed spirituality (Kempis, 1967, p.72). Nor was there any conclusive evidence from the data collected that those holding positions of seniority within a school, such as heads of department, faculties, and assistant and deputy headteachers were any more positive or negative about their role and practice in this area than those who held no such senior management positions.

4.6.4 Attitudes linked to age phase taught

Primary school teachers were more positive than secondary ones about the place of spiritual development in school and their role as teachers in providing opportunities for this to take place. Ninety-four per cent of primary school teachers compared with 64 per cent of secondary ones indicated that they considered it to be part of their role to foster spiritual development and 63 per cent of primary school teachers compared with only 29 per cent of secondary school teachers stated that they actually planned opportunities for this to take place. It should be noted, however, that there were only sixteen respondents who identified themselves as primary school

teachers compared with 59 who said they taught in secondary schools (one respondent did not indicate the age phase taught). A possible reason for this discrepancy in attitudes and practice in this area might be the culture of teachers' primarily considering themselves to be subject specialists in secondary school and thus focusing in the main on subject content rather than the wider inferences and applications associated with their subject disciplines. Might there be some truth in the old adage that 'secondary school teachers teach subjects whereas primary schoolteachers teach children'? A primary school teacher will, more often than not, have responsibility for his or her class for a whole year, often covering all areas of the curriculum. As such, it is less likely that they can disassociate themselves from addressing spiritual development and rely on others to deliver this aspect of a pupil's development. The fact that primary schools are smaller than secondary schools further compounds the matter.

4.6.5 Subject specialism

When it comes to the subject specialism of teachers and students those specialising in English, Welsh and religious education were the most positive about their role in fostering the spiritual development of pupils (see below Table V). Given that the English explores literature and poetry and encourages creative writing and expression, and religious education specifically considers spirituality within the great faith traditions, this was not surprising. Whether the culture and traditions of Wales and the Welsh have an affinity with the spiritual (Davies, 1997) which still resides amongst those who speak the Welsh language might be a matter for further research. When it came to consciously providing opportunities for this development to take

place those specialising in physical education were the least likely to attend to it, though this remained the case with most of the subjects listed (see below Table VI). Even in religious education the majority of respondents remained uncertain whether they did or did not incorporate it into their planning and lessons. There appears to be some correlation with those claiming to have had or rather not had what they consider to be a spiritual experience (see Table VII). The two subjects which have above 40 per cent of teachers and students saying they have had a spiritual experience were English and religious education. Only 20 per cent of those specialising in Welsh claimed to have had a spiritual experience so perhaps it is the case that the positive attitude towards the place of the spiritual in schools is associated with the language, traditions and culture of Wales rather than the personal experiences of students and teachers (Davies, 1997). Other than drama, modern foreign languages and English, the majority of students and teachers of the remaining subjects specialisms surveyed said they have had no such experiences.

Table V: Percentage of teachers and students by subject who considered it part of their role to foster spiritual development. *N* = total number of respondents who identified their subject specialism (percentages are based on these returns and boxes ticked on the questionnaire).

Subject	<i>N</i>	Yes	No	Unsure	N/R
Art & Design	43	44.2%	11.6%	39.5%	4.6%
Design Technology	22	55.5%	31.8%	13.7%	0%
Drama	35	37.2%	31.4%	31.4%	0%
English	40	60%	20%	20%	0%
Geography	7	14.3%	28.6%	42.8%	14.3%
History	26	46.2%	19.2%	34.6%	0%
Mathematics	36	52.6%	27.8%	19.4%	0%
Modern Foreign Languages	48	47.9%	16.7%	35.4%	0%
Music	26	50%	7.7%	38.5%	3.8%
Physical Education	68	20.6%	32.3%	41.2%	2.9%
Religious Education	42	57.1%	7.4%	33.3%	2.4%
Science	65	36.9%	36.9%	26.2%	0%
Welsh	20	60%	15%	20%	5%

Table VI: Percentage of teachers and students by subject who consciously planned opportunities for spiritual development. *N* = total number of respondents who identified their subject specialism (percentages are based on these returns and boxes ticked on the questionnaire).

Subject	<i>N</i>	Yes	No	Unsure	N/R
Art & Design	43	20.9%	60.5%	16.3%	2.3%
Design Technology	22	9.1%	72.7%	9.1%	9.1%
Drama	35	5.7%	62.9%	25.7%	5.7%
English	40	15%	67.5%	10%	7.5%
Geography	7	0%	42.9%	14.2%	42.9%
History	26	26.9%	65.4%	7.7%	0%
Mathematics	36	5.5%	75%	14%	5.5%
Modern Foreign Languages	48	18.7%	66.7%	14.6%	0%
Music	26	7.7%	73.1%	15.4%	3.8%
Physical Education	68	0%	86.8%	11.7%	1.5%
Religious Education	42	21.4%	35.7%	42.9%	0%
Science	65	9.2%	73.9%	15.4%	1.5%
Welsh	20	10%	60%	25%	1%

Table VII: Percentage of teachers and students by subject who claimed to have had a spiritual experience. *N* = total number of respondents who identified their subject specialism (percentages are based on these returns and boxes ticked on the questionnaire).

Subject	<i>N</i>	Yes	No	Unsure	N/R
Art & Design	43	37.2%	41.9%	11.6%	9.3%
Design Technology	22	22.7%	45.5%	22.7%	9.1%
Drama	35	37.2%	31.4%	31.4%	0%
English	40	42.5%	42.5%	15%	0%
Geography	7	28.6%	42.8%	14.3%	14.3%
History	26	34.6%	46.2%	19.2%	0%
Mathematics	36	30.5%	52.9%	16.6%	0%
Modern Foreign Languages	48	35.4%	33.3%	25%	6.3%
Music	26	30.6%	50%	19.2%	0%
Physical Education	68	14.7%	57.3%	26.5%	1.5%
Religious Education	42	50%	40.5%	7.1%	2.4%
Science	65	27.7%	52.3%	15.4%	4.6%
Welsh	20	20%	40%	40%	0%

4.7 Strategies to promote the spiritual development of pupils

In the data collected the perceived role of the teacher in the spiritual development of pupils, not surprisingly, correlated with the definitions of 'spiritual development' offered by the respondents. It is a matter of providing unbiased information about religion and beliefs (religious and secular) in general, encouraging pupils to discover things for themselves and reflect on what they learn. The teacher's role is to provide 'guidance to allow a child to develop his/her personal views and opinions'. A teacher should 'not push in any particular direction' 'but should teach and practice showing respect and understanding of different religions'. 'I feel that pupils should take their own path regarding their spiritual development. However, I also feel that they should receive some guidance with regards to what is the right and wrong path' was how one student put it. 'Children need to know that their questioning of feelings and life are normal and acceptable' said another student. For at the end of the day 'spiritual development is something the individual must learn and foster himself'. Some considered it a duty of teachers to address and nurture this area partly to ensure this important aspect of a child's development was covered for 'it may not be happening at home'. As one student said, 'I feel it is my job to serve a child's mind. If spiritual means attending to their welfare in and out of school then that is also part of the service I would provide'. 'However,' another said, 'the parent/guardian should take the majority of the responsibility (as all issues of a child's development that are not subject specific)'. To some extent this is imparted to pupils by the teachers being a 'good role model to children'. One student said 'if they (pupils) ask questions regarding spirituality we have an obligation to answer to the best of our ability' and, as such, spiritual development is not something teachers can avoid even if they are not comfortable dealing with it. Not all were sure this should

take place within a whole class context, for, as one student said, whilst she would offer her opinions she would certainly neither force nor encourage children to accept or believe them. This must be a matter of their own choosing. She added that she would tend to offer her opinions on a one-to-one basis rather than to the whole class.

Most comments, however, corresponded with the views of the student who said, 'I believe it is the role of the teacher to open the door to new experiences and beliefs'. The student felt this happened more through the pastoral care system of the school than through subjects. As before, there were those who were more inclined to emphasise the moral development of pupils as a key part of their role. For them being a role model means leading, and showing 'a moral example to pupils'. 'Moral development, yes, but spiritual development is a tricky subject' was how this was expressed by one student. One teacher stated categorically 'I only teach moral not spiritual'.

Some thought it was best left to the religious education department for 'spiritual development is one of the essential ingredients of teaching RE' and 'developing spirituality is an integral part of teaching RE'. As such, this aspect of a child's development was best left to others within the school who were perceived to be better qualified to tackle it. One specialising in science stated 'I am a science teacher. If they want to learn about sport they wait for PE, so when they learn about spirituality it should be done in RE'. Some said it was not the job of the mathematics and science teacher to become embroiled in this contentious area, with one adding 'I find it difficult to relate this to mathematics'. As such, it was deemed to be 'irrelevant' to his subject, thereby adding weight to the opinion of Carr (1995) that certain subjects are better placed to promote spiritual development.

Not all who taught these subjects fell into this category. A science teacher who was also a deputy headteacher said that ‘in lessons on the universe we consider the Earth in its significance by scale to the Universe, the possibility of life elsewhere, how the Universe evolved or was created etc.’ For him this was a means by which both the scientific and the spiritual were addressed. Whilst the four teachers who taught religious education in the survey all indicated that they believed it to be part of their professional responsibility to provide opportunities for spiritual development and all but one claimed they actually did this (one said he was ‘unsure’), the picture was not the same for the thirty eight students who were specialising in religious education. Nineteen of these believed it was part of their role and only five (just under 14 per cent) incorporated it into their planning and lessons. Those who did so integrated the guidance of the agreed syllabuses which suggest ‘stilling exercises’, the use of music and literature, guest speakers and plentiful opportunities for pupils to discuss and reflect upon the topics covered. As a Head of Department for religious education said, ‘opportunities are made via the County Agreed Syllabus and school schemes of work to promote a study of spirituality and hence for pupils to consider their own spirituality’.

One teacher who taught in a Catholic school mentioned how spirituality was ‘fundamental to the school’s mission’ and referred to the continuous use of the Chapel where the ‘full range of liturgical events occur’ along with taking pupils on retreats. As stated, not all religious education specialists were as confident about the spiritual development of pupils. One wrote, ‘I’m not sure myself what spiritual development is and therefore wouldn’t feel comfortable that I had sufficiently adequate knowledge to teach about it’, whilst another freely admitted that she did not ‘understand what it really means’. One teacher preferred the whole school approach

rather than to leave the responsibility with the religious education department, saying ‘personally I think it should be promoted through the whole school not only in RE’. There were some who even felt that it was certainly not the job of the religious education specialist to foster spiritual development. One student pointed out that ‘RE should be about teaching different religious beliefs not preaching your own’, this being one of the criteria for ‘spiritual development’ listed above. Another stated categorically ‘I am an RE teacher not a vicar!’ perhaps failing to distinguish any difference between the nurturing of faith and spiritual development. There was certainly no danger of confessionalism and indoctrination with this prospective teacher or the student who was a Quaker and whose subject specialism was English who in a similar vein stated ‘I am a teacher not a preacher’.

There were others who were not as positive about the role of religious education as the principal provider of spiritual development. Some ventured to suggest that religious education had no place in state schools and should be confined to faith schools, for as one said ‘I disagree with teaching RE in state schools and believe that it should only be taught in specialist religious schools’. Another felt that ‘religion and secular issues should be kept apart’ as a means of avoiding indoctrination. As one student said of spiritual development in schools ‘the classroom is not the pulpit even in church schools’. A head of a science department wrote:

Compulsory RE should be removed at KS4/5. Assemblies should involve no religious encouragement and be purely moral. Some assemblies recently have been outrageously over-religious. Yet atheist assemblies are banned! Ridiculous! It’s about time Britain dragged itself out of the Dark Ages!

These negative opinions of the place of religion in schools appear to some extent to be based on a misunderstanding of the current aims of religious education as found in

agreed syllabuses and, for some students, a somewhat polemical view of the place of religion in society was typified by the comment of the student who considered that 'most of the world's problems are due to state religion being forced on children/adults'. Certain modern foreign language students who were educated in schools in France pointed out that religion had played no part in their formal education and they were none the worse for this.

Those, like the students referred to above, who were either opposed to the role of the school in promoting spiritual development or were unsure about the concept felt it to be the role of the parents and family rather than the responsibility of teachers. As one student put it, 'parents bring up children and develop their personalities. The role of the teacher is not to interfere with religious/social/personal beliefs' and another contended that 'it's the job of parents and priests'. Added to this there was confusion about what the spiritual development of pupils actually entailed coupled with an uncertainty concerning their own spirituality. Hence, there was reluctance to influence children's beliefs and a lack of understanding of ways to achieve this goal. One teacher remembered the resentment she felt as a child when being told what to believe and consequently thought she had no right 'to tell others that a certain belief system is the right one'. There was also a feeling that they had been inadequately trained and prepared for this aspect of their role. As one said, 'I do not feel sufficiently prepared myself to provide pupils with the necessary guidance on the subject' and another 'I'm not qualified to do so (I think!)'. One teacher, of English, drama and media studies, an atheist with twenty-four years' teaching experience wrote 'I spend hours worrying about this. First I think; then I write a few things down'. She mentioned how she struggled with the requirement to deliver this area but more often than not gave up in despair. When pressed she said any planning which

might take place was ‘to teach them that there are far more important values than simply material ones’. She went on to say that, if possible, she tried to show them how to be spiritually happy even if they were not always emotionally happy. Perhaps realising that the distinction between spiritual and emotional happiness is not self-evident, she concluded: ‘I don't really know. It is all a bit philosophical for me’.

4.8 Reasons for not providing opportunities for spiritual development

When respondents were asked the reasons for their reluctance to engage with spiritual development it was this uncertainty about the precise meaning of ‘spirituality’ and the ‘spiritual development’ of pupils which prevented them from incorporating it into their teaching. Thirty per cent of the teachers and almost 45 per cent of the students highlighted ‘ambiguity’ as the reason for avoiding this area, whilst only six teachers (0.07 per cent) compared with nearly 20 cent of students stated that they did not consider it to be part of their job to concern themselves with spiritual development. One student, who indicated both the ambiguous nature of the requirement and her view that it was not part of her job, stated ‘I feel that spiritual development is too broad a term and I feel that I am not trained nor inclined to teach it’. Others referred to the time it would take to plan for this, time they felt they didn’t have to spare. One referred to ‘the pressure of time to get through a pre-determined programme of study’ and another of ‘lack of time to incorporate it explicitly into teaching.’ Another also admitted how she considered spirituality to be important but, like the student quoted above, had neither the time nor inclination really to consider it in a school context. Another suggested that having a clear definition and understanding of what spirituality and spiritual development entail would make her more receptive to incorporating it into her lessons.

One teacher who held a relatively senior position in a school felt that although she also considered the spiritual aspect of a person to be important she did not think it was being addressed by schools as ‘teachers do not understand what it means and are not trained to do it. They need training’. She went on to say that she would welcome more guidance on the subject as she would not like to see it disappear from schools. She mentioned the need for subject specific guidance. She had never even heard it mentioned in school and as far as she was concerned the school didn’t help with spirituality. As she put it, ‘staff don’t give it a second thought but there are opportunities in school’. Many kept referring to the need for a definition and guidance. As one student pleaded, ‘more specifically, how do I, as a teacher tackle this?’ This may have been the result of not having read the guidance from the variety of ‘official’ sources referred to in chapter one or the inherent ambiguity of the word itself. Whatever the reason, it is clear that the plethora of guidance which exists is either ignored by students and teachers or just not getting through to them. As a student admitted, ‘I try to include it as a part of a lesson although because of ambiguity about what it means I am not confident that it is effective’. The problem for educators who share this viewpoint, along with the majority who believe that spirituality is essentially an individual matter, is that it becomes difficult to establish criteria against which to measure or even determine whether spiritual development is taking place. It may well be the case that it is not the business of schools to attempt to measure any progress in this area, for spiritual development is not necessarily linear and it is best left to the pupils to determine how they respond to the opportunities provided; as long as the opportunities are provided (see *Spiritual literacy* 2.8.4). Herein lies the problem. Are such opportunities actually taking place? For the

majority of both groups (53 per cent of teachers and 70 per cent of students) the answer appears to be 'no'.

4.9 Positive steps in promoting spiritual development

A teacher who was interviewed acknowledged the difficulties when she said 'teachers would want a definition but I don't know if you can define it'. She went on to say that while opportunities for spiritual development sometimes 'just happen' a teacher can and should provide opportunities to have experiences which might lead to spiritual development such as 'visits, the reading of poems, moments of reflection, and then going on to discuss these'. What actually takes place as a result of activities such as these, however, she maintained, must be left to the individual to decide for himself/herself.

Others who did plan for the 'spiritual development' of pupils did so by encouraging reflection, moments to be 'still' and a study of different cultures and the lives and beliefs of those considered to be spiritual. As one student stated, 'I would ensure that there was a time set aside each day (even if it's only a few minutes) for children to reflect upon themselves and others'. These approaches we have already touched upon along with the other strategies which include consideration of morals and ethics related to current events and topical issues, questioning and discussion. One teacher spoke of promoting spiritual development 'through discussion via literature/current events such as the terrorist attack on the World Trade Centre'. Again school assemblies and the school's pastoral programme were thought to play a vital role. A key stage one teacher said she addressed the spiritual development of pupils:

to some extent. Not in the sense of lessons/curriculum planning but in the "hidden" curriculum sense - taking advantage of opportunities to discuss issues in a simple way with key stage

one, trying to get pupils to explore their feelings/thoughts/awareness looking for meaning in events/situations - empathising with others - reaching out and communicating, appreciating and being in awe of the wonderful variety of life around us. Helping/encouraging pupils to think about things deeply - not just on face value; responding to suffering/empathising with others.

Some referred to regular and planned circle time and the use of stories as a means of achieving this end. For some it was just a part of general good practice when teaching, for example, using 'praise', and 'target setting' and 'motivating pupils'.

4.9.1 Different and shared approaches to spiritual development

These views on 'how' to provide opportunities for spiritual development, reflect the current debate within education between those who favour an introspective - helping the child to draw out what lies deep inside – and cross-curricular approach (Hammond *et al.*, 1990; Erricker & Erricker, 1996, 1997; Hay & Nye, 1998; Stone, 1992; Attril, 2001) and those who would prefer a more objective (and reflective) study of spiritual traditions and 'truths', usually within the context of religious education and the creative arts (Thatcher, 1991, 1999; Carr, 1994, 1995, 1996, 1999; Wright, 1998, 1999; Beck, 1999, Copley, 2000). The polarisation is not as great as some would have us believe (Thatcher, 1991), and this is often reflected in the responses received. Both teachers and students who said they did provide opportunities for spiritual development referred to providing opportunities for reflection, promoting discussion and debate, the exploration of feelings and concerns, and encouraging pupils to express themselves through the creative arts (drama, poetry, art, music). Typical of comments which reflected these strategies were:

- ‘Plan projects which include ethical issues and which encourage personal response’.
- ‘Through introducing art and religion of other cultures’.
- ‘By considering ways in which the “big” questions can be discussed, by preparing for pupils having strong views and chairing discussions accordingly’.
- ‘Relating music to its use in religion, other cultures and beliefs where possible. Encouraging pupils to work together in groups regardless of their beliefs, problems and feelings’.
- ‘Through looking at art in a cultural and religious context and through the development of the individual and his/her uniqueness with creativity’.
- ‘By allowing them to speak about things that personally affect their lives. I try to orchestrate the lesson so that it includes this aspect’.

Along with religious education, other subjects were cited, such as PSE/PSHE, art, history and English as being suitable subject areas of the curriculum to deliver these approaches. One teacher referred to the issues which arise in child development and health and social care. A student specialising in music believed ‘it is easier to provide “spiritual” guidance in arts and humanities than other subjects. This should be considered when drawing up a policy’. The advantages and benefits of some kind of study and research of areas and topics which might be used to facilitate spiritual development are encapsulated in the comments of one student: ‘In subjects where the spiritual development of pupils may arise it would be useful to have a little

knowledge of a subject. Therefore background reading is advisable'. Teachers referred to using assemblies as a forum to introduce pertinent subject matter and provide opportunities for reflection on this. As one teacher put it, 'I take assembly on a weekly basis and provide the children with the opportunity for contemplation and prayer'. One deputy headteacher spoke of encountering some resistance when trying to meet the legal requirement of providing opportunities for spiritual development:

I organise questions on a whole school basis. I have tried to introduce a stronger spiritual element. When I was Head of Department I planned a unit of work around Easter time. This theme was to be used with top sets in Y9/10. It worked very well. However I had staff who did not want to teach it.

Nevertheless this same teacher was convinced of the place and importance of the spiritual in schools saying 'As I got older I think that the spiritual side of school is increasingly important, not religious as explained earlier. We should probably be doing more on a whole school level to give pupils a chance to experience different ways of thinking about the world'.

This feeling that teachers and schools should be doing 'more' is clearly the view of the majority of teachers (as stated earlier 71 per cent regarded it as part of their professional responsibility) and over a third of students (38 per cent) thought similarly. Despite this, it is also apparent that there is still a significant amount of confusion and lack of clarity concerning exactly what this entails in practical terms. As one teacher wrote after completing the questionnaire, 'at the end of all this I am still asking myself what "spirituality" is?' And another stated 'I am unsure of definitions and would welcome enlightenment'.

What are we to make of these findings which arose from the data collected? In the next chapter we shall undertake an analysis of perceptions recorded and attempt,

after drawing them together, to come to some conclusions based on this. However, how far these conclusions based on a localised study can be applied to the wider population of students and teachers remains questionable, especially, as we have shown, the evidence is not as clear cut as we might have hoped.

Chapter 5

Conclusions and recommendations

It is now time to pull together the multiple stands of this research and suggest recommendations based on the findings. In order to do this it is prudent to remind ourselves of the original intention of the research, the key elements of the legislation, the subsequent guidance and debate surrounding ‘spirituality’ and ‘spiritual development’, and finally the main findings based on the data collected.

5.1 Research aims and questions

The principal aim of the research was to discover what ‘spirituality’ and ‘spiritual development’ mean to teachers and prospective teachers and how far these meanings conform to the ‘official’ guidance they are given. In order to achieve this aim specific questions were asked of the target population on the meaning of ‘spirituality’ and ‘spiritual; development’ (see chapter three and appendices). Additional questions sought to elicit how teachers and students interpret, and to what extent they implement, their professional responsibilities in this area. An intended consequence of this was to discover if there is a correlation between teachers’ and students’ own ‘spiritual’ experiences and the way they perceive their role as catalysts in the spiritual development of those in their charge. As such, respondents were asked to indicate if they had what they would class as a ‘spiritual experience’. Students were also asked which, if any, subjects they studied at school and which aspects of school life assisted with their spiritual development. Other questions and requests for information were intended to discover if views varied according to gender, length of service, age phase in which they were teaching or training, and subject specialism.

In order to answer these questions it seemed appropriate to examine the views of students on undergraduate and postgraduate initial teacher training courses (both primary and secondary) and teachers (primary and secondary). Both quantitative and qualitative data was gathered through questionnaires and interviews. A detailed overview of this is contained in chapter three.

5.2 Legislation and guidance

The 1944 Act incorporated ‘spiritual development’ as a statutory requirement in the education of children that remains to this day (for example: Education Act 2002, sections 78 and 99; Education Act 2005, sections 20, 28, 50 and 73). As a consequence of this and the surrounding confusion (Ofsted, 2004; Wilson, *et al.*, 1969; see also 2.4.1) concerning exactly what this requires and entails, the various bodies associated with the education system of England and Wales have provided guidance, support and advice. Inspectors of schools determine the quality and the effectiveness of schools in applying this guidance and promoting this dimension of education.

The guidance which has been forthcoming and which we reviewed in the first chapter, whilst containing some variety of interpretation, essentially speaks of spiritual development as having ‘two main dimensions in that it is concerned with developing the inner life and motivates us to look beyond ourselves’ (ACCAC, 2000, p.7). This involves reflection, personal insight, developing beliefs and values and the search for meaning and truth. It also entails the consideration of the ‘human experience of transcendence’ (ACCAC, 2000, p.7) which may or may not involve a response to ‘a divinity’. The Ofsted guidance is similar (Ofsted, 2004) and equates

spiritual development with the development of personality and character leading to a person who is reflective, tolerant and caring with an appreciation of ‘the intangible – for example, beauty, truth, love, goodness, order – as well as for mystery, paradox and ambiguity’ (Ofsted, 2004, p.13). There is an intellectual as well as an emotional element in what constitutes spiritual development. The proximity of the spiritual to the moral (along with the other two members of the quartet, namely social and cultural) points to their interconnectedness. This is especially evident in the WAG publication *Personal and Social Education Framework for 7 to 19-Year-Olds in Wales* (2008b). The broad and inclusive interpretation of spiritual development means that, in theory, this intrinsic human characteristic is capable of being addressed across the curriculum, even though certain subjects and areas of school life might be better fitted to this purpose.

5.3 The review of literature examined

The ensuing debate fully recognises the difficulty in forming a definition of ‘spiritual’ and ‘spirituality’ and the resulting difficulty of attempting to deliver in schools something which lacks clarity and universal acceptance. Whilst it is closely related to the moral and the religious, it is not necessarily synonymous with them (see chapter 2). The former, however, provides an appropriate criterion by which to determine the educational value, if not the efficacy, of spiritual development and an expedient means of measuring the appropriateness of spiritual experience and development in schools (and life in general). Religion remains a common vehicle through which the spiritual is expressed, but it is not an indispensable ingredient of spirituality. If, as is often stated, spirituality is an intrinsic quality and attribute of being human then there is a secular, even atheistic, spirituality. In several respects

spirituality shares many of the characteristics of what Gollnick refers to as 'implicit religion' (Gollnick, 2003a).

Despite the acknowledged confusion and plethora of interpretations associated with the words 'spiritual' and 'spirituality' there are key features we can identify. These are:

- a sense of wholeness and full humanity (Macquarrie, 1982; Priestley, 1982, 1985; Isherwood & McEwan, 1993; Newby, 1996; King, 1997; Mills, 2005);
- feelings of transcendence and a 'freshness of perception' (Webster, 1996, p. 249) which may be transformative (Lealman, 1982; Ehrenwald, 1991; McCreery, 1996; Hick, 1999; Zohar & Marshall, 2000; Heimbrock, 2004);
- the quality of relationships with ourselves, others, the environment - and for some, with a higher order (Bradford, 1995, 1997; Williams, 1997; Crompton, 1998; Hay & Nye, 1998; Nye, 1998; Fisher, 1999); and
- the asking of ultimate questions and the search for meaning (Sutherland, 1995; Carr, 1994, 1995, 1996, 1999, 2003; Wright, 1999, 2000; Zohar & Marshall, 2000; Astley, 2003).

As we have seen each of these characteristics is open to a range of interpretations and is subject to debate and controversy.

According to the majority of surveys the number of people claiming to have a spiritual experience is sufficiently extensive for some to claim it is 'normal' and an intrinsic aspect of the experience of being human (Hardy, 1979; Hay, 1987; Hay & Nye, 1998; Webster, 1990; Guiley, 1993; Jackson, 1997; Gilbert, 1998; Zohar & Marshall, 2000). There are, however, surveys which do not correspond with the

claims made for the extent of such experiences (Gallup, 1982; BBC, 2000; Thompson, 2007). Neurobiological links with spiritual experiences constitute a contentious area with a number of claims and counter-claims (Ramachandran & Blakeslee, 1998; Zohar & Marshall, 2000; D'Aquili & Newberg, 2001; Heffern, 2001; Hamer, 2004; Highfield, 2006; Jones, 2006; Olkowski, 2006). The triggers which give rise to these experiences have been listed by the likes of Hardy (1979) with depression and despair, prayer and meditation, and the experience of and response to natural beauty, respectively, topping his list. The spiritual experience may occur spontaneously or as the result of a deliberate programme of 'activities'. All this shows that we are all capable of spiritual experiences and they are not uncommon. It also shows that despite the attempts to categorise the underlying common threads of these experiences (Bainbridge, 2000; Rogers and Hill, 2002) there is great variety.

It is generally assumed that these experiences are beneficial for the recipients and the wider community (Jaffe, 1989; Jackson, 1997; Bowness & Carter, 1999; Hick, 1999; Wright, 1998, 2000; Zohar & Marshall, 2000; Damasio, 2003; Lakhani, 2003; Gollnick, 2004). This is a generalisation, for there are those who dispute this claim and recognise the negative possibilities and consequences of such experiences (Rose, 1976; Jackson, 1997, p.235; Zohar & Marshall, 2000, pp. 111-112; Gollnick, 2004, p.128; Bernardin, 2006; Provonsha, 2006; pp.165-169). As a means of safeguarding the value, integrity and veracity of spiritual experiences they should cohere with other beliefs the recipient (and others) holds, correspond to the world as we know it, and have the pragmatic benefit of proving beneficial not only to the individual but also to others and the wider community. These both allow for the experience and individual reading of it whilst guarding against the more extreme idiosyncratic interpretations.

How all of this is both addressed and delivered within a school context is itself the subject of debate between those who propose an essentially inclusive, and some would say relativist (Meehan, 2002) exploration of inner experiences (Hammond, *et al.*, 1990; Stone, 1992; Erricker *et al.*, 1997) and those who would prefer a more academic exploration of the various spiritual traditions (Thatcher, 1991, 2000; Carr, 2003). There is a debate too between those who emphasise the cross-curricular possibilities and those who would locate it within specific subjects. Research has shown that teachers are far from clear about their role in the execution of these matters (Eaude, 2001; McCreery, 2001). Despite the confusion and lack of training there remains an interest in matters spiritual amongst students and pupils (Watson, 2001; Tacey, 2002; Streib, 2005). As McGrath (2007, p.20) puts it, 'organised religion may be in decline, yet a concern for spirituality remains important for many'.

5.4 Main findings of the research

5.4.1 Correspondence of responses with guidance

In the first chapter we traced the development of 'spirituality' and 'spiritual development' in education through legislation and the subsequent guidance offered by a range of quangos. The range of definitions offered contained different ideas but, in the main, tended to be catch-all and all-inclusive to the extent that they inevitably applied to all thinking, feeling persons. They recognised the subjective nature of spirituality and thus acknowledged the inherent differences associated with the terms. The more recent efforts at clarification (Ofsted, 2004) identified an intellectual and emotional aspect of spiritual development but nevertheless succumbed to tautology and a degree of obscurantism when arriving at a final definition. The equating of the

spiritual with the life-force or essence of a person, in other words, their ‘spirit’, ‘soul’, ‘personality’ or ‘character’ does not really elucidate matters. The findings of this research identify a link between the responses and the guidance whilst also arriving at what might be considered a clearer understanding of ‘spirituality’ and ‘spiritual development’. The responses gathered add to thought on the topic rather than just confirming the ideas expressed by quangos.

What do the responses collected tell us and how successful are these collated responses in providing answers to the questions we set out to answer? Whilst the actual literature does not appear to have been read by the majority of teachers and students, their responses to the questions put to them to a large extent reflected the views expressed in the guidance. Is this because the guidance is an expression and reflection of the popular view of what spirituality and spiritual development are? The guidance from the likes of SCAA, DFES, HMI, QCA, ACCAC, Ofsted and WAG was written by ‘committees’, or rather, ‘working parties’ who undoubtedly articulated the informed views of the profession. All by definition are members of the public and thus contribute to, share in and reflect upon public views and opinions on matters spiritual. As such, it should come as no surprise that there is commonality and shared characteristics as to what constitutes ‘spirituality’ and ‘spiritual development’ both in life and more particularly in education. The timeless quest related to this aspect of a person which incorporates ‘inner feelings’, ‘purpose and meaning in life’ and ‘matters of the heart’ (DES/HMI, 1977b), are intrinsic characteristics of what it is to be human.

5.4.1.1 Religion

We have seen that the majority of respondents saw ‘spirituality’ and ‘spiritual development’ as the acquisition of principles which guide and add depth to life and as such is an important component of what it is to be human. The source of these principles along with what people consider to be important depends to a great extent on an individual’s personal interpretation. Religion is still a significant and powerful factor in the spiritual equation for many (55.7 per cent of those who responded to the questions). This at first glance appears to add substance to the claims of those who consider religion to be a necessary part of spirituality and an essential element for its coherence (Stoddart, 1982; Toon, 1990; Leech, 1992; Carson, 1996; Thatcher, 1999; Sheldrake 1999; McGhee, 2003). We argued that this is not the case for two reasons. First, it is erroneous to assume that there is an innate consistency within and between religions, and, secondly, such a position would deny authentic spiritual experience and development to those who reject the fundamental tenets of all religions. Respondents agreed with the latter assertion and there was sufficient variety in their responses to maintain the premise of the former. Responses revealed both inclusive and exclusive interpretations of religion; a belief in a personal deity as described by specific faith traditions to a more nebulous and impersonal ‘higher power’; a spirituality closely identified with liturgical practices and sacred placed to a natural theology which did not necessitate church attendance. Some ‘cherry picked’ aspects of traditional belief and combined them with more esoteric, even superstitious, beliefs in ghosts and spirits. Despite the fact that for many people religion is the major source of their principles the overwhelming majority (75 per cent) had no wish to impose a religious criterion as an essential indicator for what comprises the spiritual. As such, a secular spirituality appears to have permeated the consciousness of both teachers and

students. We have seen how such a broad and encompassing definition, with its emphasis on commitment, can embrace ‘secular faith and spirituality’ (Baily, 2002, p.67). We saw that Gollnick (2003a, p.156) shows how implicit religion has much in common with certain forms of spirituality such as the way in which they both address questions of ‘identity, values, worldview and meaning’ without necessarily referring to organised religion. Our findings also add weight to the arguments of Streib (2005) and McGrath (2007) who reveal how religiosity amongst adolescents is not necessarily diminishing but merely changing, for we have a spirituality which both embraces religion yet functions independently of it. Thus, the outward decline in religious adherence (BBC, 2000) is not necessarily mirrored in teachers’, students’ and young people’s interest in matters spiritual (Rogers & Hill, 2002; Gollnick, 2003a, 2003b; Streib, 2005; Kay, 2005) and remains an area of personal development which schools still need to address.

5.4.1.2 Personal philosophy

The other sources of the principles which guide and add depth to life and thus define what spiritual means to teachers and students also correspond to much of what has been identified by academics and government bodies. The personal philosophy identified by just over a third of those teachers and students who commented on the meaning of spirituality, referred to a self-awareness whereby the individual was ‘in touch’ with their thoughts and feelings and a nurturing of the inner-self bears a remarkable match to much of the guidance which has been provided by discussion papers. *Supplement to Curriculum 11-16* (DES/HMI, 1977b) refers to the spiritual being ‘defined in terms of inner feelings’; the NCC discussion paper, *Spiritual and Moral Development*, issued in 1993 and later reissued by SCAA in 1995 highlighted

‘self-knowledge’ as one of the seven aspects of spiritual development; the Ofsted discussion paper (1994) reiterating the description of spiritual development given in the Framework for Inspection (1993) speaks of spiritual development as ‘that aspect of inner life through which pupils acquire insights into their personal existence which are of enduring worth’; ACCAC in its *Framework for Personal and Social Education* (2000) talks of ‘the development of personal insight, beliefs and values’ and the ability to reflect on experiences; and Ofsted (2004) again refers to the development of insights and an understanding of feelings and emotions. The *National Exemplar Framework for Religious Education for 3 to 19-Year-Olds in Wales* published by the Welsh Assembly Government (2008a) explicitly refers to ‘the growth of an “inner life”’ as one of the three aspects of spiritual development.

5.4.1.3 Moral

Fifteen per cent of those who offered a definition thought that a person’s spirituality depended upon the formation of moral principles and values. To them it means being a good person who is both caring and compassionate. Given the proximity of the moral to the spiritual in the legislation and subsequent guidance we, not unnaturally, find that the correspondence which occurs between the comments of students and teachers and the guidance is minimal in terms of the ‘spiritual’ but considerable in terms of the ‘moral’, which forms a separate but not unrelated section in most of the documentation.

5.4.1.4 Social skills and relationships

Despite the limited numbers (7.8 per cent) who saw the spiritual in terms of social skills and relationships with others there is a greater degree of overlap between

the comments received and the descriptions in some of the documentation (SCAA, 1995). This once more is restricted as the 'social' is part of the quartet (SMSC) and thus forms a separate section in the guidance from the likes of Ofsted (1994; 2004) and ACCAC (2000). The importance of this aspect of the spiritual is more pronounced in the academic debate on the characteristics of spirituality (Bradford, 1995; Williams, 1997; Crompton, 1998; Nye, 1998; Hay & Nye, 1998; Fisher, 1999).

5.4.1.5 Increased awareness of life and the world

The final category, whereby just over nineteen percent identified an increased understanding of life and the world as an important aspect of spirituality, was characterised by a questioning, reflective, open-minded disposition often leading to a fresh perspective on life. Much of this mirrors the amplification of the spiritual given in the papers (SCAA, 1995; Ofsted, 1994; SCAA, 1996; QCA, 1997; ACCAC, 2000, Ofsted, 2004) and is seen as distinctive attribute of a spiritual person by others (Carr, 1994, 1995, 1996, 1999, 2003; Wright, 1999, 2000; Zohar & Marshall, 2000).

Despite the overlaps between the findings of this research and the guidance offered to schools, the research findings help simplify and clarify the confusion and ambiguity contained in some of this guidance. The essence of the meaning of spirituality is simply the acquisition of principles which guide and add depth to life. The divergence in the responses is based on the source of these principles. These we categorised as: religion; personal philosophy; moral principles and values; social skills and relationships with others; and increased awareness of life and the world.

5.4.2 Implementation of guidance and statutory requirement

5.4.2.1 Professional responsibility to foster spiritual development

The majority of teachers (71 per cent) and a significant number of students (39 per cent) considered it to be part of their professional responsibility and role to foster spiritual development. This affirmative view of ‘spiritual development’ does not appear necessarily to be dependent upon the respondents’ own spiritual experiences, for only 28 per cent of students and 43 per cent of teachers claimed to have had what they would call a spiritual experience. There is undoubtedly a correlation between the two, but this is not as strong and clear cut as we might first imagine it to be. Where the correlation is evident is between the spiritual experience and the subject specialism of the respondents.

5.4.2.2 The planning for and delivery of opportunities for spiritual development

This assenting attitude towards ‘spirituality’ and ‘spiritual development’ is not, however, replicated in terms of its provision through planning and delivery. Here the numbers of those claiming they did consciously plan opportunities for ‘spiritual development’ to take place fell to 39 per cent of teachers and a mere 7 per cent of students. The majority explicitly indicated that they did not incorporate these opportunities into their lesson planning (just over 53 per cent of teachers and almost 70 per cent of students). Are teachers (and those who train them) guilty of ‘professional negligence’, given the longstanding statutory requirement placed on schools to promote this area of development? The primary reasons cited for this ‘neglect’ is their uncertainty as to what precisely ‘spirituality’ is and what planning for ‘spiritual development’ actually entails. We can sympathise with this confusion and the request from many for training, especially given the demands placed on

teachers in a utilitarian, goal oriented education system whose primary focus is on examination results. We can also understand their confusion given the inherent ambiguity of the word and the difficulty of applying a specific definition(s). Given the nature of spirituality and the variety of interpretations which can be applied to it, it is better to avoid trying to encapsulate its meaning in precise definitions but rather identify the characteristics associated with the word. There will always be some who will disagree that 'spiritual' is the correct word to describe an experience and prefer words which do not carry the baggage and connotations of religion. A small number of responses revealed interpretations of 'spirituality' and 'spiritual development' that were on the fringe of what most would consider acceptable in the private realm but not necessarily the public one. This is the price to be paid for allowing individuals to designate what they consider to be spiritual. What matters in these instances is that such views remain essentially private and if they surface within an educational context they are subjected to discussion and debate and measured against the criteria we referred to in chapter two, namely reason, shared objective reality and morality.

The minority who did address the spiritual development of pupils in their planning and teaching once more tended to apply the suggestions given in the guidance. They spoke of exposing pupils to different views, religions and moral philosophies; of affording pupils the freedom to make their own decisions; encouraging them to formulate their own principles and to act on their principles with confidence; and providing opportunities for reflection. They promoted this broad and balanced approach through reference to current events, guest speakers, educational visits, discussion and questioning which encouraged the exploration of thoughts and feelings and the search for meaning. Positive use was made of the creative arts to achieve the desired outcomes. The pastoral system of the school also plays a part in

this holistic approach with teachers providing unbiased information and presenting themselves as positive role models for pupils. Much of this is what constitutes ‘good teaching’ in that it provides for the emotional as well as the intellectual needs of the child (Estyn, 2004). There are those who subscribe to all this without calling it ‘spirituality’ and ‘spiritual development’. As we have seen, there are those who are more comfortable with ‘moral development’.

5.4.3 Gender, length of service, age phase in which they teach or train, and subject specialism

Proportionally more males (33.8 per cent) than females (30.8 per cent) of the total number of respondents claimed to have had what they considered to be a spiritual experience. Contrary to the findings of Isherwood (1999) there was no obvious distinction between the male and female respondents or of the themes running through the accounts of their experiences. Nor was there any conclusive evidence to suggest that the older one grows the more confident one is in regarding matters spiritual (McCreery, 2001). No conclusive evidence emerged from the data collected that those holding positions of seniority within a school, such as heads of department, faculties, and assistant and deputy headteachers were any more positive or negative about their role and practice in this area than subject and form teachers.

The only difference was between those who were primary (94 per cent) and secondary (64 per cent) school teachers. The former were more positive than the latter about the place of spiritual development in school and their role in providing opportunities for it to take place. The possible reasons for this were discussed in the last chapter, as were the matters of subject specialism where those specialising in

English, Welsh and religious education were the most positive about their role in fostering the spiritual development of pupils.

5.5 Implications

One of the problems of interpreting the evidence gathered is that the varied nature of the responses is capable of providing ammunition both for those who would wish to retain, although improve, the provision and quality of ‘spiritual development’ in schools and those who seek to remove it from the statutory requirements. The weight of the evidence, however, suggests that teachers and students training to become qualified teachers are not adverse to the retention of their responsibility to provide opportunities for ‘spiritual development’ despite a degree of ambivalence and even some downright antagonism towards this requirement. It is, however, an area to which most teachers and students give little thought when considering their professional responsibilities and duties but, when confronted with questions regarding the spiritual in their own lives and the lives of their pupils, often give serious and considered responses which, albeit often unknowingly, correspond to the guidance available to schools. What they request is more training and guidance to clarify in their own minds what exactly is required of them along with suggestions about ways in which they may implement this guidance. Much of this already exists in the public domain with, for example, books on activities to promote spiritual development, but clearly it does not appear to be getting through to those it is meant to reach. This requested solution is not as convincing as it first appears for such training and guidance might well be based upon an interpretation of ‘spirituality’ and ‘spiritual development’ which is not universally shared. It is to be hoped that this research has shown the complexities associated with both terms.

Whether or not the requests for further clarification and guidance are acted upon depends upon the importance schools and institutions which train teachers place on this area. Perhaps this research has added to the understanding of the meaning of the concept. We have repeatedly stressed that schools are inundated with a raft of government directives and initiatives and have to prioritise their training needs. Similarly training institutions have limited time, especially on postgraduate courses, in which to prepare students for their life as teachers and much of a student's time on these courses is spent in schools. Only if the key players – government, parents, pupils, teachers, teacher trainers, school inspectors and even employers, faith groups and the wider community – consider opportunities for the development of the spiritual aspect of a pupil's life to be important will matters improve. In the current utilitarian, goal oriented system of schooling whose primary focus is the achievement of academic targets it is essential that young people be given the opportunity to contemplate fundamental values to ensure a holistic education. As long as this takes place does it really matter whether we refer to it as 'spiritual development' or not? A chief inspector of schools in Wales once related how, when schools told him how well they were providing opportunities for pupils' spiritual development, he would say to them 'That is all well and good but can they do their sums?' He may well have been right in thinking that it was far more important for pupils to be literate and numerate than to have well developed spirituality. This may also be the view of the majority of parents and it would be interesting to conduct further research with this often neglected group to discover what they expect schools to provide for their children and where their priorities lie. How do they view the role and purpose of education? For as we have seen, parents who place their children in faith schools do so for academic reasons and an ethos which they believe reflects the lost word of the

grammar school rather than for religious reasons (O’Keefe, 1986; Hackett, 2006; BBC, 2008).

Does all this confusion and current avoidance of implementing the statutory requirement to address the spiritual development of pupils by the majority of teachers and students suggest that it might be preferable to drop any reference to the ambiguous term ‘spiritual development’ and merely require teachers to deliver a curriculum which assists pupils to select and adhere to principles which will enable them to decide courses of action throughout their adult lives? This is what it all comes down to when we examine the responses. It is the essence of the debate and the answer to this question which is one of the key findings of this research. The question may then be asked whether we still need to retain terminology which serves as a relic from our Christian heritage in what today, despite government plans to create more faith schools (DFEE, 2001), is an essentially secular society in which ‘spirituality’ has a variety of interpretations. Might this go some way to lessen the disagreement and variety of interpretation of what ‘spirituality’ and ‘spiritual development’ are? The research has shown that there is consensus about the meaning of the concept – the acquisition of principles which guide us through life. Do we therefore need the term ‘spirituality’? If we refer to the inculcation of principles, does this not resolve much of the argument?

Such a step has the advantage that phrases which are unclear and often vacuous can be replaced with concepts which students and qualified teachers can more readily comprehend and are less likely to interpret in worrying ways. ‘Spirituality’ is clearly seen as an umbrella term for a set of principles which mean different things to different people. As education should provide an environment in

which pupils form their own principles, might it not be preferable to provide guidance to teachers and schools on the encouragement of critical and reflective thinking, promoting aesthetic appreciation, endorsing shared values, and providing opportunities for creativity rather than requiring teachers and schools to ensure that opportunities for 'spiritual' development are taking place? 'Spirituality', as the research findings show, is ultimately reducible to more understandable terms. There may still be some differences in individuals' interpretation of specific words, but these may well be less diverse and perplexing than is the case at present. This would necessitate a change in the current legislation and a new direction in the training of teachers. In order to address the areas referred to above the focus would be on teaching methodology along with the provision of a wide curriculum which would provide opportunities for pupils to decide their own principles. The term 'spiritual' might be replaced by 'personal values education'. This alternative is not without its own problems of definition and interpretation but we have been provided with an indication of what might be considered to be the shared values of a civilized society (QCA, 1997).

It is interesting to note that the revised standards for becoming a qualified teacher in Wales (WAG, 2006) whilst referring to the emotional, social, cultural, personal, intellectual and creative development of pupils, make no specific reference to their spiritual development. The nearest they come to this is the requirement that those who wish to achieve qualified teacher status must show they are familiar with the PSE framework (ACCAC, 2000), which, as we have seen, identifies the spiritual as one of the ten aspects of a person in society and remains in a modified form in the current guidance (WAG, 2008). This failure to specify the spiritual, which was explicitly referred to in the previous standards for qualified teacher status (Welsh

Office, 1998), does lend weight to the proposal that the term would be better dropped and replaced with more understandable terminology. The revised standards for qualified teacher status in England (TDA, 2007) also omit the understanding of the ‘spiritual’ and ‘spiritual development’ as a necessary requirement for the award of Qualified Teacher Status (QTS).

For some, for example Dawkins (2007), there is a potential danger in over-emphasising the ‘spiritual’ within our educational system. This brings us once more to the purpose and function of education and schools. Aims in education are linked to ideologies, be they traditional whereby pupils are initiated into the values, norms and *mores* of society, progressive with an emphasis on the development of each individual pupil, vocational with its stress on preparing pupils for the world of work, or liberal which encourage each person to seek his or her own good with its emphasis on respect and equality of opportunity. Our current system combines and incorporates these ideologies to varying degrees. Philosophers of the liberal persuasion, like Hirst (1974) and Bailey (1984) argue that education should be based upon a wide foundation of knowledge from which pupils can draw throughout life. A good general education, they contend, is preferable to narrow vocational training. Based on this view, moral education is not just a matter of expediency. Education should produce the flexible, adaptable, tolerant mind which can think rationally and critically, see several points of view and realise that there is no one ideal way of life (Geen, 2006; Geen *et al.*, 2007). Do we need to refer to the ‘spiritual’ to achieve this? The inclusion of a spiritual dimension within the educational process should not mean a conflict between reason and superstition and misplaced values which Dawkins (2007), suspects is currently happening. He, however, is well known for his polemical views on religion and superstition and thus wary of the way in which ‘spirituality is a prized

commodity' with the media 'telling us to respect spiritual souls and their apparently deep insights' (Dawkins, 2007). For him there is the danger of it becoming 'a superstitious false positive'.

Does the inclusion of the 'spiritual' within our educational system really endanger this scientific and rational approach which has given rise to so many advances and improvements in life? As it stands, the answer is 'no' but this is primarily because it is essentially a benign and harmless requirement whose statutory status is generally accepted because it is widely ignored (Hay and Nye, 1998). If this is the case, and it appears to be in terms of planned opportunities for it to take place, then it is better to remove its protected place in primary legislation and replace it with the generally more understandable requirement listed above and contained in the recent standards to be met to be awarded qualified teacher status.

The data collected, however, shows that there still remains a niggling feeling for many teachers and students that spirituality is important not only in their own lives but in the lives of their pupils. It was not suggested to them that alternative language could encompass the same areas and that these might be more comprehensible and thus preferable for the majority of the profession. We can only speculate what the response to such alternative suggestions might have been. As we have discovered, most feel the 'spiritual' and 'spiritual development' important and that they should be doing something about it, but fail to act on these beliefs.

5.6 Recommendations

At the beginning of the second century Common Era, Pliny the younger, the governor of Bithynia, wrote to the emperor Trajan for guidance about the procedure for dealing with Christians, Christianity being a proscribed religion in the Roman

Empire (Chadwick, 1969; Radice, 1969). Trajan's reply revealed a reluctance to take the matter too seriously and pragmatically he suggested that as long as the Christians did not cause any trouble Pliny was to let matters lie and certainly to ignore anonymous letters identifying and accusing Christians of crimes. If a proper charge was brought then the law was to take its course. It was one of the Christian Fathers, Tertullian, who encapsulated the absurdity of this indecisive response when he said 'if we are guilty then prosecute; if not declare us innocent' (Glover, 1931). I relate this incident as in many ways it illustrates the situation in which 'spirituality' and 'spiritual development' currently finds themselves in terms of legislation and practice. This leaves us with a number of courses of action. These are: (i) to dispense with the current legislation which require schools to address the spiritual development of pupils; (ii) to revise the guidance basing it on the findings of relevant research; (iii) to provide INSET for teachers; (iii) to ensure this area is covered on all ITET courses; (iv) to develop new courses for teacher training such as a PGCE qualification in PSE/PSHE; and (v) clarify and improve the inspection of 'spirituality' and 'opportunities for spiritual development'.

These may be broadly divided into two alternatives: either to remove it from legislation or improve the training, provision and status of spirituality in schools.

5.6.1 Removing the legislative requirement for spiritual development

There is a legal requirement whereby schools must provide opportunities for the spiritual development of pupils and it is recognised that the spiritual aspect of a pupil is an important part of what it means to be human. Teachers are entrusted with the responsibility for ensuring that this development takes place. The findings of this research, however, suggest that this is scarcely happening, possibly as the result of

insufficient training (if any) and a lack of understanding. As did Trajan, so teachers consider they have more pressing matters to deal with as long as the ‘spiritual’ benignly sleeps and merely rouses itself during a school inspection. As such it is better left undisturbed for it only becomes a troublesome matter once or twice a decade.

Tertullian’s response to the situation almost two thousand years ago can be applied to the current state of affairs. If ‘spirituality’ and ‘spiritual development’ are largely ignored by schools then they should be removed from the legalisation and replaced, as we have suggested, with more understandable terms – the formulation of principles to guide pupils through life - which are thus more likely to be applied and an appropriate curriculum which allows for and encourages pupils to decide their own principles. Many strategies, such as encouraging critical and reflective thinking and aesthetic appreciation, are considered to be characteristics of the development of these principles. This research suggests that this is really what the terms ‘spirituality’ and a ‘spiritual person’ really mean. This approach would utilise language which is generally more comprehensible for teachers.

5.6.2 Keeping the current legislative requirement

If this proposal is rejected and the current requirement is retained in legislation and subject to school inspection, then it is necessary to ensure that both schools and those responsible for teacher training take this area seriously and that something is done to improve the current state of affairs. As we stated in chapter two, how much better it would be for all concerned if this were recognised, understood and not left to chance. This might be achieved by:

- allocating time for in-service training (INSET);

- identifying staff with designated responsibility for ‘spirituality’ and ‘spiritual development’ and rewarding them appropriately;
- allotting curriculum and school time for this training;
- incorporating specified course content on initial teacher training courses to cover these issues; and
- awarding staff development grants for those wishing to undertake research in this area by the General Teaching Councils of England and Wales.

In addition the suggestions made at the end of the second chapter could be espoused by schools. These were:

- The recognition that ‘spirituality’ and ‘spiritual development’ are not the same as morality and moral development but the moral is a legitimate means and criterion by which to assess the efficacy and value of the former. In all probability teachers are more comfortable with their understanding of moral development than they are with spiritual development.
- The realisation that although spirituality may often find expression through religion it is not synonymous with it. Thus, an inclusive approach to spirituality and spiritual development by schools is both rationally sound and desirable.
- A precise definition is well nigh impossible and runs the risk of controlling and restricting ‘spirituality’ and ‘spiritual development’ within narrow and exclusive parameters. It is better and more acceptable to identify the principal characteristics of ‘spirituality’ and ‘spiritual development.’

- These principal characteristics incorporate transcendence, positive relationships, and a search for meaning and truth. Schools can address these by inspiring and stimulating pupils through the curriculum; by promoting a positive school ethos which is one of mutual care, respect and a recognition of the intrinsic value of the individual and the wider community; and by allowing and encouraging pupils to ask questions and explore complex issues of meaning and values.
- Schools should focus on the positive aspects of spiritual development and what constitutes 'good' spirituality.
- 'Spirituality' and 'spiritual development' in schools ideally balance process and content. They encourage critical reflection of 'inner' feelings and experiences – one's own and those of others. Those of 'others' include not just one's own contemporaries within the educational establishment and the immediate community but also the teachings and insights of the great traditions and teachers (both religious and secular) on matters 'spiritual', both past and present.
- Looking 'inwards' and 'outwards' provides a balance and counters the charge of idiosyncratic spiritual indulgence on the one hand and censorious evaluation of what constitutes the 'spiritual' against set criteria on the other.
- Addressing matters 'spiritual' means not shying away from sensitive and difficult issues and topics such as loss and death.
- Teachers and pupils are both on a journey of exploration, and schools should focus on creating the circumstances in which 'spiritual development' may take place and restrain themselves from attempting to force and 'level' the spiritual progress of pupils. Success criteria can be based only upon pupils' knowledge

and understanding of ‘spiritual’ traditions and the skill of critical reflection. Much of what is seen as spiritual development may well take place in the private sphere of a person’s life and children, as much as adults, have a right to privacy in this domain and should not be ‘forced’ to reveal their innermost thoughts and feelings. Nonetheless, schools should still provide an appropriate context in which they are able to talk about issues and matters which are important to them.

5.6.3 The preferred option

The data collected supports both alternatives but on balance the former proposition is to be preferred, namely the removal of the statutory requirement to promote the spiritual development of pupils. This is not the same as saying that the spiritual aspect of a person is unimportant, and the evidence we have collected along with other research undertakings gives testimony to this view. Significant spiritual experiences and spiritual development referred to by respondents, however, took place almost entirely outside the context of school and most regarded what happened in school as playing little part in this development. This is not to deny an overlap, for school is part of life and life has a spiritual dimension. Is it not enough to address the more understandable, and to many acceptable, characteristics of spirituality without exacerbating the confusion of those who struggle to define, and thus incorporate, opportunities for ‘spiritual development’ into their teaching? The acquisition of knowledge and understanding and the human desire to search for guiding principles for life and make sense of experiences will remain an aspect of education and life whether or not we refer to it as ‘spiritual’ or not. As long as teachers assist pupils to select and adhere to principles which will enable them to decide paths of action

throughout their adult lives, and subjects such as religious education and personal and social education which incorporate opportunities for debate and reflection about underlying values remain part of the curriculum (and are central to any revised curriculum), the essence of ‘spiritual development’ will be there in all but name. The ‘spiritual’ will still be encountered and even explicitly considered in some instances but it will be left to the individual to name and interpret. Young people’s interest in matters spiritual will remain an area of personal development which schools will still need to address. This will not eliminate the confusion associated with the word but will release teachers and schools from the burden of a statutory requirement which is largely ignored and is no longer specifically identified as one of the standards for the award of qualified teacher status. It never formed part of the aims of education in the relevant Articles 29:1a and 1d of the United Nations’ Convention on the Rights of the Child (Crompton, 1998, pp.7, 21). Here the focus is on ‘the development of the child’s personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential’ (Article 29: 1a) and his/her ‘preparation for a responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin’ (Article 29: 1d; UNICEF, 1995)). This is enough and the spiritual whilst important ultimately remains a private matter.

5.7 Implications for my own professional development

Since undertaking this research I have been in the paradoxical position of having matters both clarified and further confused. To some extent the findings supported my own views and at other times the findings surprised me and caused me to examine my own position. I have veered between the views that spirituality only

has any real coherence within a religious framework to the antithesis of this, with various positions in between. My suspicion that teachers did not prioritise the spiritual development of pupils in their planning and teaching came as no surprise. Some areas of school life that were considered to contribute to the spiritual development of respondents ran counter to my own experiences. What it has shown me is that there are many questions but no easy answers. For some it is of paramount importance, for others it is an irrelevance. The understanding and significance of what spirituality is and how it is best developed is almost as wide-ranging as the individuals who care to reflect upon it. At the same time those individuals make up a collective group with common features and similarities. So it is with the ‘spiritual’ and ‘spiritual development’.

The practical consequences of this research have been a journal article, a magazine article, a conference presentation and a chapter in a book. I have also introduced the topic, sharing the findings of this research, into the courses I teach on especially religious education and education studies. Students are successfully encouraged to question assumptions and reflect on the issues raised, though whether or not this further confuses them is another matter.

The eclectic nature of spirituality and spiritual development presents further avenues for investigation. We have already mentioned the desirability of ascertaining the views of other stakeholders, such as parents and pupils, in the provision of opportunities for spiritual development of pupils in schools. To this might be added the views of those working in LEAs and members of the governing bodies of schools. Research into the likely variation of provision offered to students on undergraduate and postgraduate courses in teacher training across the England and Wales, and even

within institutions is another area for investigation. Where such training occurs it would be helpful to ascertain the impact this guidance has on the perceptions and practices of teachers and those training to become teachers. Longitudinal studies of the perceptions and practices of those who progress from students to experienced teachers would be of value in monitoring the development and changes which take place in their lives and the underlying causes behind this. It would be interesting to see if any significant change of view has occurred amongst those who completed the questionnaires and agreed to be interviewed. This tracking of selected individuals would be fascinating but costly and time consuming. These are research projects for another time and possibly for others.

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APPENDIX

Appendix: 1

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR STUDENTS ON SPIRITUALITY AND SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT IN SCHOOLS

1. Please tick the relevant box:

Gender:	Male	Female

2. Please indicate your route into teaching:

BA/BSc + P.G.C.E. (please specify subject[s])	
BEd or BA/BSc with QTS 4 years (please specify subject[s])	
BEd or BA/BSc with QTS 3 years (please specify subject[s])	
Other (please give details)	

3. Religious beliefs. Please tick relevant box:

<u>Christian</u>	
Jewish	
Muslim	
Buddhist	
Hindu	
Sikh	
Atheist	
Agnostic	
Other (please specify)	

4. Specialist Subject(s):

.....

.....

5. Do you consider it to be part of your role to foster the spiritual development of pupils?:

YES	NO	UNSURE
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COMMENT:

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.....

6. Do you consciously **plan** for opportunities for pupils to experience **spiritual development** in school in your lesson plans?:

YES	NO	UNSURE
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If you answered **YES** please go to **Question 7**. If you answered **NO** please go to **Question 8**.

7. Please briefly state **how** you plan opportunities for the **spiritual development** of the pupils you teach:

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.....

.....

8. If **NO** is it because:

You do not consider it is part of your job/responsibility to do this	
Ambiguity as to exactly what 'spiritual development' means	
Other (please comment below)	

COMMENT:

.....

.....

.....

9. What do **SPIRITUALITY** and **SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT OF PUPILS** mean to you?:

SPIRITUALITY.....

.....

.....

.....

SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT OF PUPILS.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

10. Do you think that a person can be spiritual without being religious?

YES	
NO	
UNSURE	

COMMENT.....

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11. Have you ever had what you would class as a **spiritual experience**?

YES	NO	UNSURE
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12. Did the experience(s) occur in school time or as the result of something that happened in school?

YES	NO	UNSURE
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If you answered **YES** would you be prepared to give brief details of the Experience?

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13.

How far have the following subjects and aspects of school life **helped or hindered** your spiritual development? **Please tick the appropriate boxes and disregard any subjects you have not studied:**

Subject/Aspect of School Life	Helped	Hindered	Neither helped nor hindered
English			
Mathematics			
Science			
Religious Education			
Geography			
History			
Welsh			
Modern Foreign Languages			
Physical Education			
Design Technology			
I.T.			
Art			
Music			
Drama			
P.S.E.			
Other subject(please specify)			
Assemblies			
School visits/Field trips			
Clubs and Societies			
Charity work			
Guest speakers			
Relationships with friends			
Relationship with teachers			
Work experience (please specify)			
Other (please specify)			

COMMENT.....

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.....

14. Type of school (LEA maintained; Voluntary i.e. faith school):

.....

15. Any other information that you think may be relevant?

.....

.....

.....

.....

Please leave contact details if you would be prepared to follow up this questionnaire with a confidential interview.

.....

.....

Or telephone Martin Rawle: 029 20416557 email mrawle@uwic.ac.uk

Thank you very much for your time and consideration in completing this questionnaire

Appendix: 2

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEACHERS ON SPIRITUALITY AND SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT IN SCHOOLS

1. Please tick the relevant box:

Gender:	Male	Female
---------	-------------	---------------

2. Please indicate your route into teaching:

BA/BSc + P.G.C.E. (please specify subject[s])	
BEd or BA/BSc with QTS 4 years (please specify subject[s])	
BEd or BA/BSc with QTS 3 years (please specify subject[s])	
Other (please give details)	

3. Number of years teaching experience:

Type of school:

Community	Voluntary Controlled	Voluntary Aided	Foundation
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4. Religious beliefs. Please tick relevant box:

<u>Christian</u>	
Jewish	
Muslim	
Buddhist	
Hindu	
Sikh	
Atheist	
Agnostic	
Other (please specify)	

5. Subject(s) you teach in school:

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.....

.....

6. Year group(s) you teach (Primary: *italics*; Secondary: **bold**):

<i>Year R; 7</i>	
<i>Year 1; 8</i>	
<i>Year 2; 9</i>	
<i>Year 3; 10</i>	
<i>Year 4; 11</i>	
<i>Year 5; 12</i>	
<i>Year 6; 13</i>	

7. Roles/responsibilities:

Form Tutor	
Curriculum Coordinator (please state subject areas)	
Head of Department	
Head of Year	
Head of Faculty	
Senior teacher	
Deputy Head teacher	
Head teacher	
Other (please specify)	

8. Do you consider it to be part of your role to foster the spiritual development of pupils?:

YES	NO	UNSURE
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COMMENT:.....

.....

.....

.....

9. Do you consciously **plan** for opportunities for pupils to experience **spiritual development** in school?:

YES	NO	UNSURE
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If you answered **YES** please go to **Question 10**. If you answered **NO** please go to **Question 11**.

10. Please briefly state **how** you plan opportunities for the **spiritual development** of the pupils you teach:

.....

.....

.....

.....

11. If **NO** is it because:

You do not consider it is part of your job/responsibility to do this	
Ambiguity as to exactly what 'spiritual development' means	
Other (please comment below)	

COMMENT:

.....

.....

.....

12. What do **SPIRITUALITY** and **SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT OF PUPILS** mean to you?:

SPIRITUALITY.....

.....

.....

.....

SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT OF PUPILS.....

.....

.....

.....

13. Do you think that a person can be spiritual without being religious?

YES	
NO	
UNSURE	

COMMENT.....

.....

.....

.....

14. Have you ever had what you would class as a **spiritual experience**?

YES	NO	UNSURE
-----	----	--------

If you answered **YES** would you be prepared to give brief details of the Experience?

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15. Any other information that you think may be relevant?

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.....
.....
**Please leave contact details if you would be prepared to follow up this questionnaire
with a confidential interview.**
.....

Or telephone Martin Rawle : 029 20416557 email mrawle@uwic.ac.uk

Thank you very much for your time and consideration in completing this questionnaire

