

Teachers' Experiences of Spirituality in Swiss Secular High Schools – An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

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Declaration

This thesis results entirely from my own work and has not been offered previously for any other degree or diploma.

The word-length conforms to the permitted maximum.

Signature 

We...teach with power and authenticity and in a way that does not force us to do moral violence to ourselves and our students by 'bracketing off' the religious dimension of lives as if it were intellectually irrelevant.

Clifford Mayes

Abstract

Spirituality in education is a contested topic. This is certainly true for Switzerland where there has been avid media-led debate about teacher religiosity / spirituality and their influence on educational practices. This puts highly spiritual Swiss teachers in a dilemma: How can they integrate their spirituality in the classroom without causing controversy?

The research literature indicates that spirituality is a complex phenomenon that generally has positive effects on teacher identity and pedagogical practice. Spirituality has also been shown to be a protective factor and a factor for greater well-being for teachers. Furthermore, spirituality can function as an alternative way of knowing in a school system that is largely defined by rationalism. However, teachers may choose to hide the spiritual aspect of their identity, because spirituality is a contested topic in public schools. While spirituality in education has received greater attention in recent years in various countries such as the UK, the US or Australia, the topic is practically non-existent in the public school sector of Switzerland.

The present study used the qualitative method of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). A repeat-interview process allowed for in-depth analysis and interpretation of the subjective lived experience of six Swiss secondary school teachers' spirituality and its influence on their teaching practices. It is the first qualitative study on teacher spirituality in secular school settings in Switzerland. Its findings shed new light on this aspect of Swiss education and thus complement the existing literature.

The key findings of this study were that spirituality is an important protective factor as well as a potent coping strategy for highly spiritual teachers. Spirituality is a key aspect of their teacher identity and a valid alternative way of knowing, but they implement spirituality often only through covert or indirect ways in the classroom. While they would wish to be able to implement it more directly, they feel that this is often not permissible. They perceive spirituality as a taboo topic in Swiss education and actively suppress aspects of it. However, they reported that the interview process helped them to reflect on and appreciate spirituality in education.

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List of Abbreviations

AVS	Amt für Volksschulen
BFI	Bundesamt für Statistik
BPS	British Psychological Society
ERG	Ethik, Religion und Gemeinschaft
IPA	Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis
LeBe	Lebensbedeutung und Lebenssinn
LCH	Dachverband Lehrerinnen und Lehrer Schweiz
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills
PISA	Program for International Student Assessment
NFP	Nationale Forschungsprogramme
SNGS	Schweizerisches Netzwerk Gesunde Schulen
TPV	Transpersonales Vertrauen
WHO	World Health Organization

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1 Introduction

The introductory chapter of this thesis presents the research focus, the context in which the study is embedded, the rationale for the study, the research scope and questions and the researcher's personal interest in the topic. At the end of the chapter, a brief outline of the thesis structure is provided.

1.1 Research Focus

Spirituality in education is a contested topic. This is certainly true for Switzerland where there has been considerable media-led debate about teacher religiosity / spirituality and their influence on educational practices. This puts highly spiritual Swiss teachers in a dilemma: How can they integrate their spirituality in the classroom without causing controversy? The focus of this research is on the lived experience of such highly spiritual Swiss secondary school teachers. How do they define their spirituality? Do they bring it into the classroom, and if so, how? How does it shape them in who they are as teachers? What are the everyday joys and struggles of doing so? The research is qualitative in nature, using a phenomenological lens to analyze this lived everyday teaching experiences of six teachers. The goal is to gain insight into both how these experiences affect them as teachers as well as how they perceive this affecting their students and their school.

1.2 Research Context - Swiss Secondary Education

This section provides some background information about Swiss secondary education, focusing on structural problems and teacher well-being, which provides a relevant context for spirituality in education.

The 2015 PISA global educational survey (OECD, 2017) revealed major structural problems in the Swiss education system. The main one is that the socio-economic-cultural background is a disproportionately large factor for determining educational success or failure. Students from academic families are 5.6 times more likely to graduate from university than students from lower-class migrant backgrounds. One main factor that the authors state is early selection in a heavily separative school system. By age 12, students in many cantons are divided up into three levels. In the area where this study was conducted, there are the levels P (Progymnasium, high requirements, approx. 25% of students), E (erweiterte Anforderungen, extended requirements, approx. 50% of students) and A (allgemeine Anforderungen, general requirements, approx.. 25% of students). Level P prepares students for university, level E for a higher level apprenticeship or technical college and level A for lower level apprenticeships.

An insight from the PISA study is that while a majority of Swiss secondary school students is feeling reasonably well and is reasonably successful, there is nevertheless a high prevalence of psychological distress and structural injustice. One of the 2015 PISA study authors' conclusions was that teachers are crucial in fostering the positive conditions for student happiness and well-being at school, such as a feeling of connection and solidarity within the school class (OECD, 2017). In this context, a national research project on teacher well-being (Kunz Heim, Sandmeier & Krause, 2014) showed that the picture among Swiss teachers is troubling: One in five Swiss teachers feels constantly overburdened and one in three struggles with depression or is at risk of burnout. 40 percent of teachers feel psychologically, moderately or severely

stressed. Forneck and Schriever (2001) found that secondary school teachers in Switzerland feel more burdened by their work than Kindergarten or primary school teachers. In a recent large-scale research project in Switzerland with 10'000 participating teachers, Berweger et al. (2019) found that difficult students as well as disciplinary problems in the classroom are the most prominent predictor of teacher stress. Teacher attrition is high in Switzerland with an average of 17% having left the profession five years after graduating from teachers college (SKBF, 2014).

1.3 Spirituality in the Classroom

This leads to the question: How can teachers create these positive conditions of connection and solidarity within schools? How can they deal with the stress? To mitigate teacher stress, various personal resources are identified in the literature, most prominently self-efficacy, emotional stability and self-regulation (Berweger et al., 2019). Other important factors are the individual processes of perception and the evaluation of what is happening in the classroom (ibid, 2019).

This is where spirituality as a personal resource comes into play. There is a variety of reasons why it can be important to include spirituality in the classroom. The first is that spirituality seems to be an important resource to teachers and to young people. Concerning teachers, spirituality can be a way to engage wholeheartedly. Miller (2009) writes: "Recognizing the spiritual reality in the classroom and allowing it into the professional awareness of the teacher urges teachers to use the fullness of themselves, their wisdom, and often some of their strongest motives." (p. 2706) For young people, there is an urge to explore questions of life meaning. They want to feel

connected. An education system that marginalizes spirituality does not meet this need. This stance is underlined by Palmer's (2003) provocative statement:

I have seen the price we pay for a system of education so fearful of soulful things that it fails to address the real issues of our lives, dispensing data at the expense of meaning, facts at the expense of wisdom. The price is a schooling that alienates and dulls us, that graduates people who have had no mentoring in the questions that both vex and enliven the human spirit, people who are spiritually empty at best and spiritually toxic at worst. (p. 379)

Secondly, there is now a large basis of research that points toward the positive effect of spirituality on general well-being (see Koenig, 2012, for a review of the literature). This effect is not a large one in most studies. Some even claim that it is negligible (King, 2014). Nonetheless, the positive results seem to outweigh the negative ones. Also, spiritual development is now commonly seen as a part of natural development, similar to physical, emotional, cognitive or moral development (see, i.e., Roehlkepartain, Ebstyne, Wagener & Benson, 2006).

Thirdly, the marginalization of spirituality in the Swiss education system has marginalized *alternative ways of knowing*. For example, students from very religious families may have grown up within a worldview that holds spiritual "truths" that may contrast with the humanistic views usually present within the curriculum. Interesting approaches to incorporating alternative ways of knowing in education have recently come out of nations such as New Zealand (Forsyth, 2017) and Canada (Ritskes, 2011).

If spirituality is seen as an important personal resource and a protective factor for teachers as well as an alternative way of knowing that makes schooling more inclusive, one can argue that including spirituality in the classroom is a form of social justice (compare i.e. Bruna, 2010; Capper, 2005; Ryoo, Crawford, Moreno & McLaren, 2009). However, including spirituality in the classroom has been challenging for many teachers in the Swiss public education system. This is partly because there has been an intense media-led debate about “religious teachers” in Switzerland and the perceived danger of religious indoctrination and proselytizing (Stienen, Bühler, Gasser & Tamcan, 2011). Of course, the caution against indoctrination must be taken seriously. Public schools must remain religiously neutral and should not promote any particular religious or spiritual worldview. But due to the lack of definitional clarity around the term *spirituality*, there is a tendency to equate spirituality with religion. This creates a fear of undue influence of teachers on students. Even in the curriculum for the newly introduced subject *Ethics, Religion and Community (ERG)*, the term *spirituality* has been avoided altogether. It seems that this insecurity about what spirituality is and what it does has prevented a necessary political or academic debate about spirituality in education in Switzerland. The topic of spirituality in education has thus remained somewhat of a taboo, and many spiritual and / or religious teachers feel marginalized to a degree by the debate about the danger of religious indoctrination. This has become evident also in the recruitment process for this study. Some teachers were very clear that they needed to remain anonymous because of the topic and content of the interviews. This puts teachers for whom spirituality is important in a dilemma. Teacher spirituality has been shown to have a major influence on educational practice (Kang, 2015; Sikkink, 2010; White, 2009). Teachers may want to incorporate spirituality in the classroom but may at the same

time feel that it is looked down upon. The aim of this study is to explore how secondary school teachers who self-identify as highly spiritual incorporate their spirituality in a secular Swiss classroom setting.

1.4 Rationale

While research on student spirituality in a school context already exists in Switzerland (NFP, 2011), research on teacher spirituality in Swiss education is practically non-existent. No studies on the topic could be found. Pirner (2013) talks of a striking research deficit in this area in the German-speaking world. Similar studies only exist in other cultural settings such as the US (i.e. Berger Drotta, 2011) or the UK (i.e. Rawle, 2009). This study is the first qualitative study on teacher spirituality in Switzerland and helps shed new light on this important topic. Its results can contribute toward promoting spirituality in education as a strategy for developing well-being amongst teachers and students. It presents spirituality as an alternative way of knowing within public education. The study further attempts to define the concepts of religiosity and spirituality in education more clearly and thus contributes to bringing clarity to the ongoing debate about the role of religious teachers in public education. The hope is that it can contribute to helping Swiss teachers incorporate their personal spirituality more freely into their teaching practices.

1.5 Research Scope and Questions

The focus of this study is on teachers and not on students. This is because there has been a recent national research project (NFP, 2011) that has analyzed youth religiosity and spirituality in schools in depth. The present study examines teachers who teach in secular secondary state schools, not in religious schools or other private schools (e.g.

Waldorf schools etc.). Also, the focus is not on religious education but on general education. This is precisely because the students who could potentially profit most from spirituality in the classroom may come from families where religion or spirituality is not practiced. They are therefore less likely to attend a religious school or to be signed up for elective religious education by their parents. While this study also includes teachers who teach the mandatory multi-faith ethics, religion and culture classes, its focus is on general education subjects with the assumption that spirituality cannot be compartmentalized (Watson, de Souza & Trousdale, 2014).

The overarching research question of the study is: *How does the spirituality of highly spiritual teachers influence their pedagogical practice in Swiss public secondary schools?* In order to answer this question, three main areas will be looked at: 1) How do highly spiritual teachers define their own spirituality? 2) How does this spirituality impact their identity as teachers? 3) How does their spirituality impact their pedagogical work and their relationships within the school?

1.6 Personal Interest

This research carries a personal interest for me. It has been said that research is “me-search”. This is definitely true for this study. I taught for seven years in Swiss secondary schools, both public schools and faith-based schools. I then changed careers and entered the world of development. In both fields, I was confronted with spirituality as a personal resource for people. The contrast between teaching at a faith-based school where spirituality was very present through devotional times, student prayer, bible studies etc. and the state school where it felt unwise to incorporate spirituality too overtly was striking to me. Not that the state schools were not good

schools or that the teachers were not at least equally dedicated, but spirituality added for me that extra layer, both for myself and for my students. By exploring questions of meaning, by connecting to the transcendent and to each other, it helped shape a strong community. By seeing the world not only through a scientific perspective, but also through a spiritual one, a realization could grow that many things in the world remain mysterious and that there is often not just one “true” answer.

I would like to portray what this looked like for me with a practical example. At the faith-based school, each school day would start with a 15-minute devotional time. Each teacher was free to fill this devotional time as he or she saw fit. I would often start with a minute of meditative silence, then read a quote (e.g. Scripture or a poem), then let the students listen to music and respond to the quote in creative ways (drawing, creative writing, silent reflection). At the end of this short time period, we would usually share and collect prayer requests and close the time with a short common prayer. These short 15 minutes would allow students to get settled into the day, connect with their inner self (and for some with God or with the transcendent) and with their fellow students and start the day out of this place of centeredness, connectedness and quiet, often after having hectically gotten ready for the day and rushing to school. Sharing personal prayer requests would create a sense of vulnerability and togetherness amongst the students, but also between myself and the students a place of community and belonging. Praying for one another has a unique power to it, not just in a spiritual sense, but also in advancing empathy and altruism. In contrast, at the state schools, I felt that even starting the day with a minute of silence was at times frowned upon a bit (and maybe that was just my own personal concern). I struggled more there to create this sense of centeredness and

connectedness within the class even though I felt it would be equally important for the students. This has led me to the main research question of this study, which in other words is about finding out what good practices are to incorporate meaningful spiritual elements into the school day, so that all children can profit from them, whether they attend a faith-based or a secular school.

1.7 Thesis Structure

Following this introductory chapter, chapter two reviews the relevant literature about spirituality in education and about teacher identity. Chapter three describes the ontology and epistemology in which this research is embedded in, plus the research methodology and research method that have been used. Chapter four presents the main findings of the study, structured according to the themes identified in the interviews. Chapter five interprets these findings and discusses them in light of the existing research literature. The final chapter offers conclusions and recommendations for teacher practice and the school community.

1.8 Chapter Summary

This introductory chapter presented the research focus of for this study and introduced some aspects of the Swiss context in which the study took place. It then set out the rationale, the research scope and the research questions for the study. I further outlined my personal interest in the topic and my motivation for investigating it. Finally, an overview of the thesis structure was provided.

2 Literature Review

In this chapter, important aspects of the research fields of spirituality in education as well as teacher identity are reviewed. The first section provides a general overview of arguments for or against spirituality in education, highlights the difficulties of defining spirituality, and looks at the Swiss and international contexts of spirituality in education, showing similarities and differences in the conditions for spirituality in education between different Western countries. The next section focuses on teacher identity, including marginalized aspects of teacher identities in general and spirituality as a particularly marginalized aspect. The last section introduces the concept of *alternative ways of knowing* in education and its link to spirituality.

The selection of readings in this review is based on the following inclusion and exclusion criteria:

- a) Only literature on spirituality in education in a Western context has been included. Literature from non-Western school contexts has been excluded (see also section 2.1.3).
- b) Within the field of spirituality in education, the focus is on teacher spirituality and not on student spirituality.
- c) The focus is on secondary education and not on primary education or higher education.
- d) Only studies researching spirituality in public education were considered. Studies on religious or faith-based schools as well as private schools were omitted.
- e) Studies on spirituality in religious education classes (as a subject matter) were excluded.

- f) Because it is difficult to conceptually differentiate between teacher spirituality and teacher religiosity (see section 2.1.1), research on both teacher spirituality and teacher religiosity has been included.

These criteria were defined for the consideration of literature that correlates to the Swiss context in which the participants found themselves in.

When selecting all these inclusion criteria (Western context, secular school, public education, secondary education), it becomes evident that the research that meets all the criteria is scarce, that it is largely qualitative or conceptual in nature and that the studies often use rather small sample sizes. While quantitative studies on spirituality in education do exist, these mostly measure teacher spirituality in relation to classroom management (i.e. Barsh, 2017; see also section 2.1.4.1) or teacher well-being (i.e. Cook & Babyak, 2019; spirituality and well-being is a well-established research field; see also section 2.1.2.3). The qualitative studies cited in this review often use a semi-structured interview design with generally small sample sizes. Their findings reflect the specific participants' views as well as the researcher's worldview to a greater degree than quantitative studies would and are therefore not as easily generalizable. Some of the literature used in the present review is more philosophical in nature (i.e. Palmer, 1999 / 2003) and must be seen as adding an additional perspective rather than as contributing to the empirical body of research. However, in their entirety and in combination with the existing theory, I find that all these voices paint a valid and nuanced picture of what spirituality in education can look like in a Western context. I considered it important to have them included in their variety. It is in the nature of the subject of spirituality that the empirical cannot be separated cleanly from the subjective, conceptual and philosophical.

2.1. Spirituality in Education – A Theoretical Overview

In the last two decades, considerable attention has been given to spirituality in education in a Western context. Spirituality in education is both an ancient tradition and a relatively new research field. Most European school systems have their historical roots in religious institutions. Thus, spirituality in education has been associated with organized religion for a long time. Looking at spirituality in education through an empirical and psychological lens is a much more recent development. This rapidly growing research field stands in contrast to the marginalization of spirituality in education through the secularization of Western society in the 20th century. Some see education as inherently spiritual. Palmer (1999) writes:

The spiritual is always present in public education whether we acknowledge it or not. Spiritual questions, rightly understood, are embedded in every discipline, from health to history, physics to psychology, entomology to English. Spirituality—the human quest for connectedness—is not something that needs to be “brought into” or “added onto” the curriculum. It is at the heart of every subject we teach, where it waits to be brought forth. (p. 8)

Proponents of spirituality in education argue for the inclusion of spirituality from various standpoints and perspectives. According to them, spirituality can make education more holistic. Coe (2016) as well as Dalton, Dorman and Byrnes (2018), for example, argue that only a curriculum which includes the spiritual next to the social, cognitive, affective, somatic and aesthetic, can support students to reach their full potential. Hogan (2009) believes that spirituality helps students become more creative. In the *International Handbook of Arts Education* (Bresler, 2007), an entire section of more than 100 pages is dedicated to spirituality. Jones (2005) finds that spirituality

connects students with issues of purpose and meaning as well as with other human beings. Because of these reasons, spirituality is frequently found in various forms of arts education (e.g. Campbell, 2006), music education (e.g. Van der Merwe & Habron, 2015), environmental education (e.g. Skamp, 1991) and outdoors education (e.g. Ungar, Dumond & McDonald, 2005). Others argue that spirituality renders education more socially just. Lingley (2016) formulates this poignantly:

It is my view that democratic educators should directly engage with an emancipatory construct of spirituality as enthusiastically as they engage with other equally significant topics of critical social justice pedagogy. Such engagement is necessary as a political act that challenges the aggressive binary of mind/soul foisted upon education by Western male epistemic privilege wherein students and teachers who experience their spirituality as central are expected to leave this part of their humanity at the schoolhouse entrance. (p. 1)

One of the complexities that surrounds the discussion about spirituality in education is that often arguments are based on personal philosophy or worldview rather than on scientific data. Lovat's (2018) concluding statement on spirituality in education depicts this tentativeness: "One senses that spiritual education done well, in a way that exploits wonder and imagination and impels self-reflectivity, could one day come to be seen as possessing especially facilitative potential to impel sound reasoning and good overall learning." (p. 44) To strengthen their arguments, proponents of spirituality in education also base their claims on research from the burgeoning field of spirituality and health (see sections 2.5.4 and 2.6.2 of this literature review).

It is therefore not surprising that spirituality in education is a contested topic in much of the Western world. Spirituality remains notoriously difficult to define and measure

Various arguments critical of spirituality in education exist. The major and most important argument is that of undue influence of teachers on students. Marples (2006) argues that “it is difficult to see how children are to be initiated into [spiritual education] without being indoctrinated” (p. 293). Especially for teachers who see themselves as both spiritual and religious, the two concepts seem to merge into one entity. This argument is further explored in this literature review in the section “teacher spirituality” (2.5). From a different perspective, Dalton (2001) warns against using spirituality in education “as a kind of ubiquitous self-serving therapy for students” (p. 23). Wringe (2002) questions whether spirituality needs to be made explicit in the curriculum and argues that many learning activities in school meet similar goals of fostering connection or exploring questions of meaning. Hyland (2017) criticizes the “McDonaldization” of spirituality in schools, where spiritual techniques are taught without any connection to their traditional meaning.

Whether spirituality in education is seen as beneficial or detrimental for students, the literature documents that it is likely that highly spiritual teachers incorporate their personal spirituality in one way or another into their pedagogy (Hartwick, 2015; Sikkink, 2010; White, 2009). It is therefore important to analyze how teachers define spirituality for themselves and how they experience their spirituality’s influence on their teaching practices.

2.1.1 Spirituality and Religion – Theoretical Underpinnings and Definitions

Spirituality is difficult to define. The definitional complexity contributes to the challenges of implementing spirituality in education. Spirituality is a complex, multidimensional concept (de Jager Meezenbroek et al., 2012). There is no generally

accepted definition of spirituality today. Many scholars from various fields have proposed at times contradictory definitions (for an overview, see i.e. McSherry & Cash, 2004; Palouzian & Park, 2005; Zinnbauer et al., 1999). McSherry and Cash (2004) argue that spirituality has different meanings for different people and cannot be defined in a way that is true for everyone. Koenig (2008) points out that the definition of spirituality has changed over time: “Traditionally, spirituality was used to describe the deeply religious person, but it has now expanded to include the superficially religious person, the religious seeker, the seeker of well-being and happiness, and the completely secular person.” (p. 349). Despite all the complexity, certain communalities have emerged in most definitions of spirituality. Hyde (2008) speaks of the common element of connectedness / relationship; Benson, Roehlkepartain and Rude (2003) highlight the common aspect of self-transcendence and being embedded in something greater than the self and Tanyi (2002) underlines the shared aspect of existential life questions or a search for meaning, purpose and the sacred. In a recent review of definitions of spirituality, Weathers, McCarthy and Coffey (2016) found the same three shared defining attributes in the literature: connectedness, transcendence and meaning in life.

The differentiation between spirituality and religiousness also remains complex. Many researchers use the terms interchangeably. Koenig (2012) argues that most research up to date has not separated the two concepts well enough. In contrast, Zinnbauer et al. (1999) identify three ways in which spirituality and religiousness are polarized in the literature: “organized religion versus personal spirituality; substantive religion versus functional spirituality; and negative religiousness versus positive spirituality” (p. 889). They argue for a more integrated construct. Zinnbauer and Pargament (2005) also

question the usefulness of polarizing spirituality and religiousness and suggest two definitions that complement each other by saying that the spiritual quest can take place outside of religion, but that spirituality is at the same time the core of religion. Similarly, de Souza and Halafoff (2017) differentiate between traditional and contemporary spirituality. Traditional spirituality is linked to a religious faith and has to do with the search for God or a divine being. Contemporary spirituality is not necessarily related to God, but focuses on the connection with something beyond the individual self, be it God, nature, the Universe, humanity, etc. Because precise definitions seem elusive, McSherry and Cash (2004) suggest a taxonomy of spirituality that covers the entire continuum from theistic spirituality on the right to a secular spirituality on the left. In their recently published literature review on religious and professional beliefs of school teachers, Häusler, Pirner, Scheunpflug and Kröner (2019) observe that “scholars - as well as respondents in empirical research – tend to speak of [...] ‘spirituality’ to indicate a certain distance against institutionalized religion” (p. 26).

For this study, I approached the research with my own broad definition of spirituality: *Spirituality is someone’s search for connection with something beyond himself or herself and for answers to life’s ultimate questions. It is a personal attempt to make meaning and connect with the transcendent or sacred. Spirituality can take place within or outside of religion.* This “something greater” can either be theistic (i.e. God, Higher Power) or secular (i.e. nature, the universe, humanity). The ultimate questions, which have to do with the meaning and purpose of life, can but do not need to include the sacred. This definition includes the ontological possibility of there being a Higher Power without necessitating it. In this definition, spirituality can be expressed by itself

or in connection with religiosity. This definition assumes that spirituality is an innate human attribute, something that is shared by all human beings and not just by people who adhere to a religious faith tradition. In defining spirituality, I have followed Weathers et al.'s (2016) recommendation to include the three dimensions of connection, transcendence, and meaning in life. In differentiating between spirituality and religiosity, I am building on Zinnbauer and Pargament's (2005) double-definition of spirituality and religiousness, which particularly resonates with me. This definition shows an overlap of religiousness and spirituality for the religious person, while it can also be entirely separate from religion for the non-religious person.

Spirituality is a broader term than religiousness. Spirituality includes a range of phenomena that extends from the well-worn paths associated with traditional religions to the experiences of individuals or groups who seek the sacred outside of socially or culturally defined systems. (p. 36)

Spirituality alone addresses the discovery, conservation, and transformation of the most ultimate of all concerns, the sacred. Yet religiousness is not viewed as inconsistent with or an impediment to spirituality. In fact, spirituality is the core function of religion. ...Religiousness represents a broader phenomenon than spirituality, one that is concerned with all aspects of human functioning, sacred and profane. (p. 37)

It seems clear that spirituality and religiousness overlap for some people while some practice spirituality without any religion or religious affiliation. Just like spirituality, religiousness is a multidimensional concept and there exists a plethora of definitions (Zinnbauer & Pargament, 2005). For this study, the definition of religiousness and its differentiation from spirituality offered by Koenig, McCullough and Larson (2000) also seems helpful:

Religion is an organized system of beliefs, practices, rituals and symbols designed (a) to facilitate closeness to the sacred or transcendent (God, higher power, or ultimate truth/reality), and (b) to foster an understanding of one's relation and responsibility to others in living together in a community. Spirituality is the personal quest for understanding answers to ultimate questions about life, about meaning, and about relationship to the sacred or transcendent, which may (or may not) lead to or arise from the development of religious rituals and the formation of community. (p. 18)

This definition sees religion not as a contrast to spirituality but as a complement, as suggested in Zinnbauer and Pargament's (2005) definition above.

While spirituality may or may not be connected to religion for the students, this study's participants were all both spiritual and religious (see participant description, section 3.6.2). For them, there is a considerable overlap between their personal spirituality and their religious faith. They would often use the term "personal faith" as a construct that encapsulates both spiritual practices and religious beliefs. This is in line with a study by Ostermann, Büssing and Matthiessen (2004) conducted in Germany which shows that only 9% of the population sees themselves as only spiritual but not religious. The assumption in this study was that teachers may use their personal spirituality (be it religious or not) to help nurture their students' spirituality (be it religious or not). Teacher spirituality and student spirituality do not necessarily need to be congruent. In this study, spirituality is therefore seen as "a broader term than religiousness. Spirituality includes a range of phenomena that extends from the well-worn paths associated with traditional religions to the experiences of individuals or groups who seek the sacred outside of socially or

culturally defined systems.” (Zinnbauer & Pargament, 2005, p. 36). In the context of this study, the term spirituality therefore includes the concepts of religiosity and faith.

Such a broad and encompassing definition of spirituality is also fitting for this research because of the following reasons: a) The existing literature on teacher spirituality/religiosity in secular education most often does not clearly differentiate between teacher spirituality and teacher religiosity. There is therefore only very limited literature available that focuses solely on teacher spirituality. b) The participants clearly differentiate between spirituality and religiousness when defining the terms (see section 4.2.3). However, many of the spiritual elements they talk about (e.g. prayer, the Holy Spirit, relationship with God) are often seen as religious elements in the literature. It is therefore helpful to be able to include some of the existing literature on teacher religiosity also. Nevertheless, it is important to keep in mind that for the participants, the differentiation between spirituality and religiousness remains important.

Much of the research on spirituality has been conducted without a clear theoretical framework (Park, 2007). This is partly due to the definitional complexities and the resulting controversies about what spirituality is exactly. There are various models for placing spirituality in a larger theoretical context. Friedman, Krippner, Riebel and Johnson (2012) offer an overview and suggest the following broad categories: traditional models, indigenous models, Western models, integrative-philosophical models, psychological models and neurobiological models. Often, aspects of these models are also mixed. For this study, I have found a meaning systems framework (Park, 2010; Silberman, 2005) to be a useful model. It states that for a spiritual person,

spirituality is a central element in life that helps to “make sense” of and interpret life events. This framework is described in greater detail in the methodology part of this thesis (see section 3.1).

2.1.2 Spirituality in Swiss Public Education

This section of the literature review examines spirituality in Swiss public education because Switzerland is the main geographical context for this study. Nevertheless, it is important to keep in mind that the research literature on the topic largely stems from a non-Swiss context. The subsequent section will therefore briefly offer a larger perspective on spirituality in other Western countries.

While spirituality plays a central role in various religious and alternative private secondary schools as well as in denominational tethered religious education in Switzerland, this study is only concerned with the state-funded free public secondary education. Historically, the Swiss public school system that was established in the 18th century was basically an extension of the Catholic or Protestant Church, depending on the canton (region). Its purpose was to prepare students for admission into the faith community. Its curricular content was built on religious dogma. The pedagogical concepts were derived from the Christian biblical faith (Späni, 2003). It was not until 1874, in light of the new constitution of 1848, that religious neutrality of public schools was prescribed by constitutional law (ibid, 2003). While the school curriculum became secularized, there was still a constant presence of the Church in public schools throughout the 20th century through denominational religious education classes, even though the classes became increasingly ecumenical and later even interreligious. Starting in the 1970s, religious education provided by the Church

became increasingly unpopular, with a growing number of students being signed off by their parents (Jödicke & Rota, 2014). This led to a reform of the religious education system with the 2007 HarmoS education act (EDK, 2007), precipitated by the development of the new national curriculum *Lehrplan 21*. In this new curriculum, religious education provided by the Church still exists as an elective. However, there is a new mandatory subject called Ethik, Religionen, Gemeinschaft (ERG; Ethics, Religions, Community), an approach based on the arguments of secularization and religious pluralism. Because the Swiss education system is based on federalism, Lehrplan 21 and ERG have not been introduced in all Swiss cantons yet. In Switzerland, a new curriculum needs to be approved by popular vote first. In the cantons of Baselland and Basel Stadt, where the interviews for this study took place, Lehrplan 21 and ERG were introduced on the secondary school level either relatively shortly before or simultaneously to data collection (Baselland 2018, Basel Stadt 2015). This means there exists neither an extended experience base for teachers nor any empirical evaluations of ERG in these schools at the time of writing.

The goal of ERG is to learn about religions and worldviews and their impact on people (Bleisch, 2015). In its concept, it is untethered religious education, meaning that it is not directly linked to a religion or denomination. According to Alexander and Carr (2006), such untethered religious education has been largely reduced to anthropology and cultural studies. Interestingly, the ERG curriculum does not mention the terms spirituality or spiritual at all. In their textbook for ERG teacher education, Bietenhard, Helbling and Schmid (2015) remark that it is obvious that ERG education is very limited in the area of personality development, social coexistence or spiritual experiences. Thus, by switching from mandatory tethered religious education to

untethered religious education, spirituality or spiritual development have practically been eliminated from the Swiss public secondary school curriculum.

On a policy level, new guidelines have been introduced recently in the canton of Baselland due to a few highly publicized incidents including religious minority students. One such incident was a male Muslim student refusing to shake a female teacher's hand. Another was a father forbidding his daughters to participate in swim class. These incidents have led to court rulings deciding which religious exemptions are acceptable and which are not (AVS, 2017). This in turn led to the drafting of policy guidelines for all public schools of the canton that clarify how teachers and school administrations should handle religious problems with religious minority students (AVS, 2017). However, the document is very vague about the extent to which Swiss teachers can incorporate their own religiosity or spirituality in the classroom. There are only two more concrete statements: a) The celebration of Christian holidays is permissible in Swiss state schools as long as it is in a neutral fashion, does not hurt anyone's religious feelings and other religion's holidays are also made a topic of discussion. b) Teachers are allowed to wear religious symbols, but they should be aware of their function as a role model. Beyond these guidelines, the individual school programs and policies from the schools where the participants of this study were recruited do not contain anything about religion or spirituality.

Beyond the official curriculum and policy, there seems to be an uneasiness about things spiritual in Swiss public education. This is at least partly because of the debate mentioned earlier about teachers who are religious in Switzerland and the perceived danger of religious indoctrination and proselytizing (Stienen et al., 2011). The fear of

undue influence of teachers on students has largely excluded the concept of spirituality from education. It is interesting to note that in this debate, spirituality is generally equated with religiosity. By law, Swiss are mandated to restrict their personal religious freedom to guarantee the religious neutrality of the school, to not hurt anyone's religious feelings and to create an atmosphere of tolerance (Tappenbeck & Pahud de Mortanges, 2007). In 2008, the Dachverband Schweizer Lehrerinnen und Lehrer (LCH, the umbrella organization of Swiss teachers) argued in a position paper (LCH, 2008) that ethics, religion and values education should be taught by specialists only. This was de facto a request for other teachers to stay away from religious topics. In 2009, the Swiss media portrayed religious teachers as a potential threat for Swiss schools (Benini, 2009). This led to a national research project on teacher religiosity (Stienen et al., 2011). To the knowledge of the author, it is the only research that has also examined (to a limited extent) teacher spirituality in Switzerland. Teacher spirituality is here portrayed as a source of energy, as something "esoteric", and as a means of self-actualization. In this debate on teacher religiosity, spirituality is therefore either seen as interchangeable with religiosity or as an esoteric energy source. Both portrayals are rather limited and also carry negative connotations. In this context, it can be difficult for teachers to incorporate their personal spirituality in the classroom.

2.1.3 Spirituality in the International Education Context

It is important to take into account the different global contexts for spirituality in education in order to understand the international literature. Watson, de Souza and Trousdale (2014) assert that "the different contexts across nations and regions mean that educators face quite distinct conditions in which to frame their approaches to

spiritual education and research, and the nature and impact of these differences is not yet understood.” (p. i). While providing a more comprehensive analysis of spirituality in Swiss education, spirituality and education in other Western countries will only briefly be examined to provide some international context. The focus of this review is intentionally restricted to Western countries. This is for two reasons: 1) It keeps the overall school contexts more comparable. These countries generally have similar school systems, religious demographics etc. They are all secularized states. Spirituality in education looks very different in countries where religion is a strong national identification factor and is being actively promoted in schools, like for example in Thailand. 2) A truly global perspective on spirituality in education would go beyond the scope of what is possible in this review. Watson, De Souza and Trousdale (2014) offer a perspective on the extent of literature that exists in the Asian, African, South American and Middle Eastern contexts. The review will therefore be limited to a small selection of countries that contribute considerably to the research literature of spirituality in Western education. Finland was chosen because it is a European country with a similar religious demographic to Switzerland (predominantly Protestant) and a similar religious education system. The UK, Australia and New Zealand were given special attention because spirituality is explicitly part of their national curriculum. In addition, spirituality in US education is given some consideration because the existing contemporary research on spirituality in a Western context stems to a large extent from the US. The various neighboring countries of Switzerland are not considered here for various reasons: Germany has extremely limited research on the topic; France, Italy and Austria have a predominantly Catholic population quite different to the Swiss population and very limited research is available.

Finland has a similar religious demographic to Switzerland and there is a comparable trend to pluralism where spirituality is becoming deinstitutionalized, privatized and individualized (Tirri & Ubani, 2014). Also, Finland's religious education system is similar with pressure to change the denominationally tethered system to an untethered religious education system. A further similarity is that spirituality as a term does not appear in the national curriculum (ibid, 2014). Equivalent to Switzerland, this has also led to delegating the spiritual matters within education to the religious education classes (Hella & Wright, 2009). However, in contrast to Switzerland, there is considerable research activity in the area of spirituality and education in Finland. Tirri and Ubani (2014) outline four main frameworks for approaching spirituality in education: a) spirituality as spiritual intelligence b) spirituality as spiritual sensitivity c) spirituality as an expression of post-secular religiosity d) spirituality as a contributor to positive youth development. They argue for a post-secular lens when analyzing spirituality in education.

In the UK, spiritual development as well as Religious Education have had a long-standing place in the curriculum. Spiritual development first appeared in the 1944 Education Act and was confirmed in the 1988 Education Reform Act that set in motion a National Curriculum, as well as in the 2011 Education Act (Adams, 2014). However, as Best (2014) states, this has led to much debate about how to define spirituality and spiritual development, and how schools can spiritually develop the students in a multiethnic, multicultural and multifaith society. In schools without religious affiliation, Ofsted's (2014) guideline was to implement spiritual development across the curriculum, not tethered to religious education. In the Ofsted

School Inspection Handbook (2018), spirituality is listed as one of the four SMSC dimensions (spiritual, moral, social and cultural development) and criteria are provided on how to assess such spiritual development. According to Best (2014), this has created much uncertainty amongst teachers about how to do this well. Adams (2014) calls for better initial teacher training in the realm of spirituality and spiritual development. In general, the literature shows that there is considerable debate in the UK about how to implement spirituality and spiritual development in schools without religious affiliation. The topic is nevertheless somewhat marginalized due to the definitional problems surrounding the term spirituality as well as the lack of clear pedagogical strategies and the increasing teacher workload.

Ever since the Education Act of 1872, Australian schools were to be free, compulsory and secular. According to Hyde (2014), most policy makers and educators still see spirituality as a by-product of religion and are therefore weary of implementing a spiritual dimension into education. More recent curricular changes around the turn of the millennium have nevertheless made the inclusion of spirituality into the curriculum explicit for the first time:

Schools play a vital role in promoting the intellectual, physical, social, emotional, moral, spiritual and aesthetic development of young Australians. Schools share this responsibility with students, parents, carers, families, the community, businesses and other education providers. (Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, 2008, p. 4)

Hyde (2014) as well as Lovat (2017) point out key issues about spirituality in contemporary Australian public education: a) It is unclear how teachers are to address the spiritual dimension in education. b) There is ambiguity about teachers' own

spirituality in relation to their professional practice. This, according to Hyde (2014), can lead to an omission of the spiritual in the classroom.

Similar to the UK, spirituality has a long-standing tradition in the New Zealand curriculum, which is evident in national curriculum documents throughout the 20th century. Fraser (2014) points out the fusion of Maori and Christian spiritual values and states:

‘Taha wairua’, for instance, is Maori for the spiritual side of humanity. In the New Zealand school curriculum fostering this spiritual side is considered part of the development of well-being for all students. Just what that means, however, is seldom made explicit. (p. 103)

She further cautions that the most recent curriculum policy documents only refer to spirituality very briefly, which may indicate a marginalization of spirituality in education. Fraser and Grootenboer (2004) examined teachers’ views of incorporating spirituality in the New Zealand classroom, with the conclusion that teachers feel they cannot precisely plan for spiritual development, but that a climate can be cultivated that fosters spiritual development.

Much of the discussion about spirituality in public education in the US revolves around the issue of separation of church and state (a discussion that goes beyond the scope of this review), with many educators cautious of talking about spirituality in public schools (Noddings, 2008). Also, the US context is quite unique as its population is on average much more religious than the ones in the other Western countries portrayed in this overview. Nevertheless, much of the research on spirituality in the realm of education comes out of the US. Prominent US educators

such as John Dewey, Parker Palmer, bell hooks or Nel Noddings advocate for spirituality in education (Lingley, 2016). Palmer (2003) writes

I vigorously reject the imposition of any form of religion in public education, including so-called school prayer. But I vigorously advocate any way we can find to explore the spiritual dimensions of teaching, learning and living: It is the ancient and abiding quest for connectedness with something larger than our egos—with our own souls, with one another, with the worlds of nature and history and literature, with the obligations, opportunities, and mysteries of being alive on the face of the earth. (p. 380)

One unique aspect of spirituality in education that was particularly promoted in the US is critical spirituality (Dantley, 2003) or critical spiritual pedagogy (Ryoo et al., 2009). Critical spirituality's goal in an educational context is to overcome inequalities in schools. Its roots are in the social justice aspect of the Christian faith tradition. In this regard, its definition of spirituality differs from the one used in this study. With theoretical roots in critical theory, it is linked to African American spirituality as well as liberation theology (Ryoo et al. 2009). Proponents are critical educators such as Paolo Freire (Boyd, 2012) or bell hooks (Lingley, 2016). McCray, Beachum and Yawn (2013) outline the four following elements of critical spiritual pedagogy for educators:

- a) critical self-reflection – a process of “reflect[ing] deeply on their own beliefs, assumptions, biases, stereotypes, and feelings” (p. 101).
- b) deconstructive interpretation – a process of “breaking down processes, ideals, concepts, statements, philosophies, proclamations, etc., to expose the realities behind them” (p. 102).

- c) performative creativity – developing practices that move the school from the status quo to a more democratic community.
- d) transformative action – implementing the social change in the school community.

This brief review of the different international contexts show a great variety of spirituality in education. This is especially obvious on a curricular level, where spirituality and spiritual development are an explicit and mandated part in some nations' curricula while the term is completely omitted in others'. Nevertheless, some common trends can be identified:

- a) There is a renewed interest in researching spirituality in education distinct from religious education. However, there is definitional ambiguity.
- b) There is a trend towards including spirituality as an aspect of human development in the curriculum.
- c) There is disagreement among educators about how spirituality should be included in the classroom. Such uncertainty leads to a marginalization of spirituality in education.
- d) There is a general lack of pedagogical training, strategies and tools for implementing spirituality in the classroom.

2.1.4 Teachers and Spirituality

Teacher spirituality is a relatively new and emerging research field. Hartwick (2012) conducted a literature review on the religious and spiritual lives of public school teachers and noticed a remarkable increase in studies since 2001. There is very little

research with a sole focus on teacher spirituality in public education (a noteworthy exception is Owen's [2019] doctoral dissertation on secular spirituality), why this section of the literature review also includes research with a boarder focus on teacher religiosity. Various studies show that a teacher's spirituality and / or religiosity has a considerable influence on his or her professional identity (e.g. White, 2009), pedagogical practice (e.g. Sikkink, 2010), teacher-student relationships (e.g. Hartwick, 2015a) and well-being (e.g. Bohnsack, 2009). Hartwick (2015a) points out that "empirical research is only beginning to address the spiritual or 'inner life' of the teacher" (p. 123). Nelson (2010) adds that "the education profession does not consider religion or religious identity very important in the educational journals or educational conferences" (p. 352) and not much attention is given to religious identity groups compared to other identity groups. Häusler et al. (2019) observe that in Europe, very little research has been devoted to the topic of teacher religiousness / spirituality. In addition, Pirner (2013) underlines that there is a dearth of research on this topic in the German-speaking world. His explanation for this is that many researchers have distanced themselves from church due to their personal problematic experiences with religion. Most research findings stem from research conducted in the US and are not necessarily directly applicable to a Swiss context. They also often do not differentiate clearly between spirituality and religiousness or even use the terms indiscriminately (see Koenig, 2012). The following sub-sections will provide a review of this literature, structured according to the four main areas of influence identified: teacher identity, pedagogy, teacher-student relationships and teacher well-being.

2.1.4.1 Teacher Spirituality and Pedagogy

A few studies examined the impact of teacher spirituality on pedagogical practices. Again, these studies do not always clearly differentiate between spirituality and faith or intrinsic religiousness. Sikkink (2010) shows how teachers' spirituality/religiousness influences their pedagogy mainly in areas of the "hidden curriculum": classroom discipline, preferred learning styles and informal socialization messages. White (2014) identifies the following major areas where spirituality/religiousness influences pedagogy: fostering community, using mistakes for learning, emphasizing the Golden Rule (a moral decree that exists in most major religions with the intent for persons to treat others the way they would like to be treated themselves) and classroom discipline. In both studies, the authors show that the classroom discipline structures adopted by the teachers was in correlation with the strictness of their believe system. Pirner (2013) underlines the importance of the experience of love and grace for religious teachers as a motivation to treat students and colleagues in kind ways. He also observed that spiritual / religious teachers often pray for their students or colleagues, which is in line with Hartwick's (2015b) study on teacher prayerfulness. Kang's (2015) study of early childhood teachers demonstrates that highly spiritual teachers tend to feel more efficacious in classroom management than their less spiritual peers. Barsh (2017) found a positive correlation between teacher spirituality and teachers' view of their self-efficiency in a large sample of Californian teachers. Wright (2010) identified intrinsic religious orientation as an important contributing factor to the self-efficiency of a teacher. In these few studies, what stands out is that spirituality is most often associated with a positive effect on pedagogical practice.

2.1.4.2 Spirituality and Teacher – Student Relationships

Some studies also examined the impact of teacher spirituality on teacher – student relationships (for an overview of the literature, see Hartwick, 2012). White (2010) examined the impact of a teacher’s worldview on student relationships: “The religious beliefs to which these teachers ascribe impact how they view students and how they structure social relationships between students and between themselves and the students.” (p. 45) Hartwick (2015a) found that teacher spirituality correlated positively with positive relationships with students and negatively with depersonalization frequency scores, meaning that these teachers tended to treat their students “as unique individuals, giving students personal attention, caring about their well-being, and emotionally extending themselves to students” (p. 136). Not surprisingly, spiritually active teachers tend to encourage the spiritual development of students more. Pandya’s (2016) large-scale study of elementary school teachers across 12 nations shows aspects of spirituality that are valued cross-culturally in education: building a relational consciousness and a values education that entails notions of unity, peace, unconditional love and forgiveness. Fraser (2007) also found that spirituality in school can foster community and a sense of belonging, making schools more inclusive. A general theme of these findings on spirituality and student – teacher relationships is that the highly spiritual teacher seems to focus on positive relationships.

2.1.4.3 Spirituality and Teacher Well-Being

Teacher spirituality not only influences pedagogy, classroom management and relationships, but can also be an important factor for teacher well-being. Koenig,

editor of the seminal *Handbook of Religion and Health*, conducted an extensive literature review (2012) of more than 3300 research articles on spirituality/religiosity and health published between 1872 and 2010. His findings show that a majority of studies demonstrates that spirituality has significant positive associations with the following domains: coping with adversity, positive emotions, happiness, optimism, meaning and purpose, self-esteem, sense of control, social support, academic success and healthy eating habits. It has significant negative associations with depression, suicide, anxiety, substance abuse, and delinquency/crime. Similar results were found by Klein and Albani (2007) in their review of European studies on the topic of religiosity and health. They describe six theories that attempt to explain the positive impact of spirituality on well-being. The first three closely link spirituality with religiosity. For the other three, spirituality can be either linked to religiosity or independent of religion.

- 1) Social support/cohesion: for people who live out their spirituality in a religious setting, there is substantial social support available within the religious community.
- 2) Behavior regulation: religious people generally ascribe to clear behavioral guidelines that prescribe i.e. moderate alcohol consumption etc.
- 3) Cognitive orientation/coherence: Religious belief systems usually contain explanations of why the world is the way it is. This can provide meaning in difficult life circumstances.
- 4) Alternative values: Spirituality can free the individual from pressure and stress to succeed and conform in society. Suffering can be seen as meaningful.

- 5) Positive emotions: This can include feelings of connection, of belonging, of being valuable and accepted by a higher power etc.
- 6) Meaning-based coping: Spiritual rituals such as prayer provide an active strategy to deal with stressful life circumstances.

Teacher stress and burnout is a common occurrence in the Swiss public school system. In a representative survey of Swiss secondary school teachers, Kunz Heim, Sandmeier and Krause (2014) found that Swiss teachers' well-being is threatened by stress. 21% of teachers said that they feel constantly overburdened, 33.7% are in danger of burnout and 13.7% of teachers feel depressed once a week or more. While the literature on teacher spirituality and well-being is not as developed as the literature on spirituality and student well-being, teacher spirituality is nonetheless seen as a protective factor for teachers (Bohnsack, 2009; Hartwick & Kang, 2013; Margolis, Hodge & Alexandrou, 2014). The main reasons given for this are that spirituality can help find greater meaning in one's work and can provide a greater trust in the guidance of a higher power. In this context, Mayes (2001) advocates for spiritual reflectivity for teachers, "the exploration of deeper ontological commitments and constructs regarding teaching" (p. 477). Also, the area of mindfulness in the teaching profession has received greater attention lately (see Ergas & Hadar, 2019, for a review of the literature), with mindfulness practices seen as a way of reducing stress and improving general well-being amongst teachers (Crain, Schonert-Reichl & Roeser, 2017; Gold, Smith, Hopper, Herne, Tansey & Hulland, 2009; Roeser et al., 2013). In conclusion, considering the extent of existing literature that describes the positive impact of spirituality on health, it is astonishing that spirituality is not more prevalent in the research literature on teacher well-being.

2.1.4.4 Teacher Spirituality/Religiousness – Caveats and Negative Aspects

Despite the largely positive association of spirituality and well-being in the research literature, there are some important caveats. For one, it has been shown that religion and spirituality can also have adverse or ambiguous effects on well-being. Examples thereof are the possibility of excessive guilt and / or increased anxiety (Reeves, Beazley & Adams, 2011) or a positive association with obsessive-compulsive disorder (Klein & Albani, 2007) or with depressive symptoms (Cotton et al, 2006). These occur most often when spirituality is linked to a religiosity that contains beliefs such as fear of an angry god or fear of final judgement. As a noteworthy counterpoint to the largely positive literature on spirituality and well-being, there are a few studies (King, 2014; Schnell & Keenan, 2013) which show that spirituality without religiousness has negative effects on well-being. The thesis of the authors is that people with generally worse mental health might be drawn more toward spiritual practices.

In a keynote at the Third International Conference of the British Association for the Study of Spirituality, King (2014) challenged the research on religion and spirituality by arguing that

although published research shows that there is a positive statistical relationship between religion and health, the size of that health gain is extremely small. Furthermore, it would seem that spirituality divorced from religious practice may be associated with worse mental health. Much of the research is poorly conducted and some researchers hold strong personal beliefs that may influence its interpretation. (p. 106)

In addition, most research on spirituality and well-being stems from the US, and findings may not always be transferable to a Swiss context. While youth in the US tend to live out their spirituality more openly, for many Swiss youth, their spirituality is a very private matter that is often not even disclosed to friends. In this regard, Utsch, Bonelli and Pfeifer (2014) as well as King (2014) conclude that research evidence on spirituality and health is more ambivalent in the European context.

Teacher spirituality and religiousness also have some controversial or negative impacts. Much has been discussed on how religious ideology affects education. Unlike in the US where the debate on separation of religion and state created much academic literature also in the field of educational research, in Switzerland this discussion has predominantly taken place in the media. Here, the relationship between education and religion has still not been clarified (Stienen et al., 2011).

The main argument found in the public as well as in the academic discourse against overt teacher spirituality in education is the danger of student indoctrination (e.g. Marples, 2006). While White (2010) sees much good in incorporating beliefs such as the Golden Rule, she also cautions that religious teachers may welcome some of their students' religious and spiritual views while silencing others depending on their personal religious beliefs. Kahn (2006) argues that religiously fundamentalist teachers may hinder a true multicultural education with its goals of equity and social justice especially in the area of LGBT students and gender equality. This is in line with Rokeach's (1965) thesis that "those who identify themselves as belonging to a religious organization express more intolerance toward racial and ethnic groups (other

than their own) than do non-believers” (p. 9). Pirner (2013) reports that religious or spiritual teachers identify tensions with the curriculum, with other teachers or with parents because of their religious / spiritual beliefs. In regard to the curriculum, this is especially true for science teachers where many seemingly contradictory claims exist between science and religion (Chan, 2014; Johnson, 2016; Mansour, 2008).

2.2 Teacher Identity

This section of the literature review focuses on spirituality and teacher identity. Because one of the research questions of this study is how spirituality influences teacher identity, it is important to understand what teacher identity is, how it is formed and how it influences pedagogical practice. In this section, I therefore attempt to first define teacher identity by highlighting common aspects of teacher identity that can be identified in the literature. In further sub-sections I will shed light on three areas that are especially relevant in light of the findings of the present study: a) teacher identity and well-being, b) marginalized teacher identities, and c) the relationship between teacher identity, teacher spirituality and pedagogical praxis.

Much research exists on teacher identity, and it is generally acknowledged that teacher identity is an important aspect of teaching, influencing a teacher’s well-being (Zembylas, 2003) as well as the quality of teaching (White, 2014). Beauchamp and Thomas (2009) point out that attention should be given to teacher identity for various reasons; teacher identity can be used as an analytical lens to examine aspects of teaching, as an organizing element in a teacher’s professional life and as a tool for teachers to make sense of who they are in relation to others or to their context.

Research on teacher identity has mostly been either theoretical (e.g. Korthagen, 2004) or qualitative in nature (e.g. Seifert, 2019). There are a few studies that have attempted to measure the construct of teacher identity (Hanna, Oostdam, Severiens & Zijlstra, 2019). An example of a quantitative study is Friesen and Besley's (2013) research on teacher identity in a cohort of first year student teachers. Otherwise, most studies are qualitative in nature, using small sample sizes with as few as one participant (e.g. Seifert, 2019), exploring the construct of teacher identity in its depth and richness. Many of these studies on teacher identity have had a particular focus. For example, reviews exist on teacher identity with teachers of English as a second language (Martin & Storm, 2016), student teachers (Izadinia, 2013), science teachers (Avraamidou, 2014) or white teachers (Jupp, Berry & Lensmire, 2016). In general, it can be said that there is a robust body of research literature on teacher identity, and that it is a much-researched and much-debated subject in the field of education.

What becomes clear from reviewing this literature is that - similar to spirituality - teacher identity is a complex phenomenon that is difficult to define. While there is no one agreed-upon definition, various shared elements that constitute teacher identity can be identified in the literature. Teacher identity is seen as not singular but *multiple*, with each individual inhabiting multiple identities and sub-identities and also possibly a multiplicity within each identity position (Reeves, 2018a). For example, teachers can see themselves as highly spiritual teachers and also as very strict teachers. Teacher identity is seen as a combination of *personal and professional* identities (Rodgers & Scott, 2008). Such identities may even at times contradict themselves (Reeves, 2018a) and need to be balanced to avoid conflict between them (Beijaard, Meijer & Verloop, 2004). Teacher identity is further seen as *dynamic* and continually

under construction, involving both a person and a context (Beijaard, Meijer & Verloop, 2004). “A teacher’s identity shifts over time under the influence of a range of factors both internal to the individual, such as emotion...and external to the individual, such as job and life experiences in particular contexts” (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009, p. 177). This re-shaping happens through interaction with others (ibid, 2009) and through practice, “the enactment of identity through one’s behavior and participation in particular communities” (Reeves, 2018a, p. 2). Teacher identity is also understood to contain a *narrative* element, where telling stories about oneself as a teacher equals doing identity work (Watson, 2006). Reflecting on these narratives is then an important way of exploring and shaping teacher identity (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). Finally, teacher identity is seen as *central* to the teaching profession. Teacher identity “stands at the core of the teaching profession. It provides a framework for teachers to construct their own ideas of ‘how to be’, ‘how to act’ and ‘how to understand’ their work and their place in society.” (Sachs, 2005, p. 15). It can be seen as the “meaning made” (Rodgers & Scott, 2008, p. 739) out of the various aspects of the teaching profession. These common elements of teacher identity identified above can then be condensed into the following definition: *Teacher identity is a lens through which teachers perceive their profession and their role in society. This identity is made of multiple sub-identities, is continually being constructed through interaction, practice and the reflection on personal narratives, and is central to the teaching profession.*

2.2.1 Teacher Identity and Well-Being

In the context of this study, an important question is what influence teacher identity has on teacher well-being. According to Diener (2000), psychological well-being consists of various components: overall life satisfaction, satisfaction with key life domains, high levels of positive affect and low levels of negative affect. Because work is seen as a key life domain, the degree of satisfaction with one's work has a considerable influence on one's psychological well-being (ibid, 2000). There has been much research done on general teacher well-being in recent years (see Acton & Glasgow, 2015, for a review of the literature). For Switzerland, the empirical basis is less established. However, Kunz Heim, Sandmeier and Krause (2014) conducted a large-scale quantitative study with 714 Swiss secondary school teachers to assess general teacher well-being, showing that 45% of Swiss teachers feel moderately to severely stressed. The research literature on teacher identity describes a clear link between positive teacher identity and a greater sense of well-being for teachers (Zembylas, 2003). In a four-year longitudinal mixed-methods research project, Day and Kington (2008) worked with 300 English primary and secondary school teachers and could identify strong empirical associations between teachers' positive and negative sense of teacher identity and its impact on well-being. They conclude that teachers' "capacity for resilience relates to their sense of positive or negative identity" (p. 22). Various studies show that when teachers have problems with forming consistent and stable teacher identities, this can lead to stress (Morrison, 2013), less resilience (Day & Kington, 2008), decreased wellbeing and teacher attrition (Acton & Glasgow, 2015).

2.2.2 Marginalized Teacher Identities

As mentioned above, certain aspects of teacher identity can at times contradict themselves. In the context of this study, special attention should be given to these “paradoxical aspects” (Clarke, 2009, p. 185) of teacher identity because they may have a negative impact on teacher well-being. Reeves (2018b) speaks of the conflict that is at times created between external pressures and teachers’ beliefs and values. Ball (2003) points out the personal and psychological costs of conflicting values and calls it a “*values schizophrenia* [that] is experienced by individual teachers where commitment, judgement and authenticity within practice are sacrificed for impression and performance” (p. 221). She describes this as “a potential ‘splitting’ between the teachers’ own judgements about ‘good practice’ and students’ ‘needs’ and the rigors of performance” (p. 221). Acton and Glasgow (2015) describe this conflict as a “continued compromising of professional identity and values” (p. 109) and suggest that this may be an important factor for understanding teacher attrition. Clarke (2009) developed a model of teacher identity that shows how conflict can be a central aspect of teacher identity work and that many teachers often feel pulled into different directions. His model consists of four axes of teacher identity:

- a) The substance of teacher identity: The individual teachers ask what aspects of their overall identity are also part of their teacher identity. For example, for one teacher, only the intellectual aspects are part of the teacher identity while others also include the emotional aspects of their identity.
- b) The authority-source of teacher identity: This refers to external sources that a teacher turns to or finds convincing. These can for example be educational theories or religious values.

- c) The self-practices of teacher identity: This refers to “teacherly behavior”, what teachers consider compartments and pursuits that are fitting for a teacher, such as certain disciplinary routines or extracurricular activities.
- d) The telos of teacher identity: This axes is concerned with the ultimate purpose and the highest goal that a teacher has. For example, this could be “changing young kids’ lives”.

Within this model, one can see how conflicting interests, values and practices can exist especially between teachers and the existing external entities (such as school policies, new technologies etc.). These conflicts can at times lead to a marginalization or hiding of certain aspects of a teacher’s identity. Vandrick (1997) identifies various *hidden identities* such as ethnic or religious minorities, sexual orientation, political orientation, disabilities, mental illness, HIV or cancer. Reeves (2018b) shows in her study with US high school teachers that the tension between a teacher’s value (care for students) with neoliberal educational principles (curriculum standardization) can lead to “performing a *fabrication* where one teaches toward an external version of effective teaching that conflicts with one’s own internal version. Performing this fabricated teaching requires teachers to act out an inauthentic version of their teaching self in order to be viewed within the institutional context as a ‘good’ teacher” (p. 9). Vandrick (1997) finds that hiding one’s identity can lead to guilt or ambivalence, thus creating psychological tensions:

For example, gay teachers or students may feel that they should be "out" in order to be true to themselves, to provide a model for other gays, or to show pride rather than shame. But these same individuals may feel fear, knowing

that there may be very real, possibly even dangerous, consequences of being out. (p. 154)

In her research with lesbian teachers, Bower (2019) demonstrates that lesbian teachers often do not disclose their sexual identity because they fear it to be seen as a danger to students. They also often feel they must be perfect teachers in order to compensate for their sexual orientation, and they are shaped by the schools to be teachers who do not talk about their personal lives. A similar marginalization of teacher spirituality / religiousness can also be found in the literature and will be described in section 2.2.3.

This leads to the question of how such a marginalization or hiding of parts of teachers' identities can be mitigated. There is only scarce literature addressing this specific issue. One recommendation is to cultivate vulnerability. In his research with teachers, Alsop (2018) observes that a teacher needs to be able to be vulnerable to move beyond shame. His research is linked to Lasky's (2005) work on vulnerability and teacher identity, where she concludes that teachers need "conditions that cultivate and sustain willing vulnerability" (p. 914) in order to be able to be who they want to be. In this regard, Brown's (2006) foundational work on shame resilience offers some practical applications. To become shame resilient, people need to "identify personal vulnerabilities, increase critical awareness of their shame web, develop mutually empathic relationships that allow them to reach out to others, and learn to speak [about] shame" (p. 51). A related recommendation is to create *safe spaces*. Song (2016) found that some teachers use

cover stories in which they portray themselves as experts who comply with the school curriculum and policy [and] express only their positive emotions

sanctioned in the school setting, reserving who they really think they are or how they really feel for *secret stories* that are shared only with other teachers in a safe space. (p. 636)

Various authors show how such safe spaces can be fostered in schools, i.e. in regard to the LGBT community (Vaccaro, August & Kennedy, 2012), immigrants (Seif, 2009), racial minorities (Delano-Oriaran & Parks, 2015) or religious identities (Nasir & Al-Amin, 2006).

2.2.3 Teacher Identity and Spirituality

Pirner's (2013) research on teacher spirituality / religiosity and professional identity revealed that many religious teachers see their profession as a calling, and that these teachers tend to have a higher confidence in their impact to change the world and a higher motivation to help students. Sikkink (2010) found that "religious identity leads to a different relation to the self, including feelings of love, joy, peace, and persistence in their teaching roles" (p. 167) and that it also increases loyalty, commitment and trust towards the school community. He concluded that many teachers fuse their religious identities with their teacher identities. Kang's research (2015) showed that teachers "recognized their spiritual beliefs as an integral part of their professional identity, which was embedded in their treatment of people in their workplace" (p. 308). Nelson-Brown (2006) comes to a similar conclusion in his dissertation about Baptist teachers in the US:

[Religious identity]... was not only an important feature in their self-identity construction, but . . . in how and why they approached the teaching profession and stayed in it, in their attitudes towards right and wrong, love and justice,

and in how they understood their relationships with other staff and with students. (p. 230)

White (2009) has researched the impact of teacher religiosity/spirituality on teacher identity and pedagogy in the US. She observes that “the silence around teachers and religion assumes that teachers are neutral agents in the choice and delivery of curriculum” (p. 859), but that it is impossible to separate one’s personal and professional identities; spirituality and religion are thus part of the lived experience of teachers within the institutional context. Also, as Glanzer and Talbert (2005) state, “we cannot expect public school teachers to divorce their identity from their teaching...Asking public school teachers to distance themselves from their various social identities (e.g., gender, ethnicity, race, faith, etc.) may lead students to feel alienation and the loss of moral guidance and bearings” (p. 26). Mayes (2001) puts this into similar words when he talks of teaching “in a way that does not force us to do moral violence to ourselves and our students by ‘bracketing off’ the religious dimension of lives as if it were intellectually irrelevant” (p. 491). Moon, Ryan and Pigott (2019) advocate for self-reflective investigations for teachers so that they can become more aware of how their spirituality shapes who they are as teachers and how this impacts their teaching and their relationships. In conclusion, it becomes clear in the literature on religiosity/spirituality and teacher identity that spiritual practices and experiences have a substantial influence on teacher identity.

2.3 Spirituality as an Alternative Way of Knowing

The current Swiss curriculum is largely based on the dominant Western ideologies and philosophies. It is ontologically rooted in realism. Rationality and cognitive scientific knowing take a central place. Western education theory provides the basis

for the dominant pedagogy (Zimmerli, Malaguerra, Künzli & Fischer, 2009). As much as this is necessary to prepare students for the market economy and for society in general, this is insufficient. Critical thinking skills are taught, but the dominant worldview is rarely questioned (Kruse, 2010). There seems to be little room for alternative ways of knowing such as affective knowing, intuition, contemplation, spiritual knowing (e.g. divine guidance), mystical knowing or indigenous knowing. Indigenous ways of knowing are usually characterized by an understanding that spirit pervades everything, and they tend to be non-rational, intuitive, focused on the inner world and on the collective. Also, they are based on the concepts of whole-body intelligence, spiritual intelligence and heart wisdom (see Doetzel, 2018 and Hewson, 2014, for an in-depth introduction to indigenous knowing). Silencing such alternative ways of knowing (and alternative intelligences) can be problematic, as there are students who come to school with a worldview quite different to the one prevalent in the school system. Examples are students from practicing religious families or students with a non-Western migrant background. Such students (or teachers) with alternative worldviews are often forced to split between the religious private and the secularized public world. This leads to an unnecessary dualism.

The question that arises is: what counts as knowledge in educational settings and whose knowledge counts? (see Kelly, Luke & Green, 2008, for an introduction to this longstanding debate; see also discussion section 5.4). The argument here is not to discredit scientific knowing. The argument is to integrate it more with alternative ways of knowing such as spiritual knowing. Cole (2011) argues that we should consider spiritual ways of knowing in education that “rely on intuition and wonder, aspects that Western scientific models discount as taboo” (p. 1). In a similar vein,

Merriam et al. (2005) admonish that only “as the Western educational system begins to value other ways of knowing will its learners have an opportunity to focus less on the self and increasingly on forming a unity with the world at large.” (p. 6). Hart (2014) explains:

The shift in knowing is very simple but subtle; it takes place when we lead with curiosity instead of judgment, when we make contact instead of categories, accommodate rather than just assimilate, when we appreciate rather than defend against. Rather than objective, this may be considered a more empathic way of knowing. (p. 251)

There are interesting examples of re-discovering indigenous or minority ways of knowing in education in Western countries where such ways of knowing had been marginalized for a long time. Good examples are New Zealand, the US and Canada. Forsyth (2017) describes the educational philosophy of Ata in New Zealand. Ata is a holistic, relational, indigenous Maori pedagogical approach to teaching, with the core principle of mutual respect. Forsyth (ibid) cautions that when using such an educational philosophy, “it is imperative we strive to maintain cultural integrity in all our actions. From a Maori worldview, Ata has its own life force, it has ‘mauri’ (a life essence)” (p.1730).

Dillard, Abdur-Rashid and Tyson (2000) reflect on “epistemologies of the spirit” (p. 448) from a US perspective:

The recognition of the need for non-Eurocentric paradigms to reflect and express the lives and worlds of African-Americans in particular and nondominant cultural groups in general, is widespread....[This] is also a call

for alternative pedagogical practices, practices that grow out of a different vision of what it means to be human – of what it means to realize one’s full human potential. (pp. 448-449)

Ball (2004) describes a school setting in Canada where First Nations community elders incorporate indigenous ways of knowing and spirituality alongside Western based knowledge and learning. In her evaluation research, she documents the success of such partnership with “an unprecedented high rate of postsecondary diploma completion among the First Nations community members.” (p. 454).

Including spiritual ways of knowing makes teaching more socially just. Both hooks (2003) and Noddings (2013) argued for incorporating spiritual ways of seeing the world as a way of emancipatory and culturally responsive teaching. Lingley (2016) states that

spiritually responsive pedagogy honors the principle of pluralism and challenges oppressive schooling practices through the inclusion of marginalized epistemological and ontological perspectives, such as those of African and indigenous students.... The Eurocentric binary of secular and spiritual reflects the socially constructed epistemology of dominator culture; accordingly, challenging the binary through spiritually responsive pedagogy is necessary as a leverage point for pedagogical inclusion of socially constructed epistemologies of students (and teachers) from historically marginalized groups. (pp. 7-8).

In Switzerland, including such alternative ways of knowing could mean creating space for acknowledging that different people in the classroom have different, yet equally valid, worldviews and ways of knowing. If a student feels that he has a connection to a Higher Being that guides him and provides him with spiritual insight, this should be

accepted as another way of accessing truth or reality. This is in line with Natsis' (2016) argument "for the importance of granting teachers permission to bring their private spirituality into the public arena of the classroom, to allow their students' spiritual lives to transpire and be validated." (p. 70).

Arguments against including alternative ways of knowing in education largely stem from the fear that teachers would abuse their position of power to promote their personal worldview in the classroom. It needs to be acknowledged that this is the Achilles heel of spirituality in education and especially of incorporating alternative ways of knowing into education.

A debate related to the one about alternative ways of knowing is about alternative intelligences (see Emmons, 2000). A number of scholars promote the existence of spiritual intelligence. Vaughn (2002) writes that "spiritual intelligence calls for multiple ways of knowing and for the integration of the inner life of mind and spirit with the outer life of work in the world". Sisk (2002) characterizes spiritual intelligence as deep self-awareness, inner knowing, deep intuition, oneness with nature and the universe, and a unique way of problem-solving by seeing the big picture.

2.4 Chapter Summary

This literature review first provided an overview of general arguments for or against spirituality in education. It then offered definitions for the term spirituality, showing the challenges of defining the concept clearly and of differentiating it from religiosity. A next section portrayed the Swiss context for spirituality in education and a brief overview of what spirituality in education looks like in other Western countries. The

following section reviewed the literature on teacher spirituality, showing that spirituality influences a teacher's pedagogy and well-being. The next section reviewed the literature on teacher identity, with a special focus on well-being and marginalized teacher identity (including spirituality as such a marginalized identity). The last section of the chapter described spirituality as an alternative way of knowing (and an alternative intelligence), showing that such alternative ways of knowing could complement Western education systems that are largely built on rationalism.

3 Methodology

This chapter describes the theoretical framework, the ontological and epistemological assumptions and the method chosen for researching spirituality in this study; it also explains why these choices have been made. King and Crowther (2004) argue that spirituality is a fluid concept that is difficult to research objectively. It is experienced and expressed subjectively, influenced by factors such as upbringing, worldview, religious affiliation, conditioning etc. Experience of spirituality is very personal. Researching spirituality therefore requires a careful choice of appropriate methodology.

3.1 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for positioning and analyzing spirituality in this study is a meaning systems framework (Park, 2010; Silberman, 2005), following Murphy's (2017) sequencing: Spirituality is seen as a central part of a meaning system for people who consider themselves spiritual. Such a meaning system influences their goals, beliefs and sense of meaning in life and provides "a comprehensive framework for perceiving, understanding and evaluating their experience as well as organizing and directing their behavior" (Park, 2007, p. 320). Silberman (2005) describes a meaning system as idiosyncratic. It goes beyond a mere belief-system, is central to people in everyday life and serves as a lens through which reality is seen and interpreted. It is holistic in that it includes self- and world beliefs, contingencies and expectations (Silberman, 2005). A meaning system is also open to learning, development and change. (Park, 2010). According to Park (2011), meaning systems have two levels: global and situational. Global refers to general orienting systems such

as justice, coherence or control, situational to their application in specific situations such as a stressful life event. In addition, as Park (2007) states, “a meaning system framework is a useful way to conceptualize the potent and multidimensional influences of [religion and spirituality] on individuals’ health and well-being.” (p. 319). A meaning systems approach seems therefore fitting for providing a larger framework within which spirituality can be placed.

Silberman (2005) offers reasons why a meaning systems framework is well-suited to researching spirituality and religion:

- 1) It holistically includes cognitions, goals, emotions and actions.
- 2) It helps to understand the dynamic and process-oriented function of spirituality.
- 3) It illuminates the complexity and malleability of spirituality.
- 4) It can contribute to the understanding of the relationship between religion/spirituality and well-being.

One of the main concerns of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), the method used in this study, is meaning making (Langdrige, 2007). IPA explores how people make meaning of their personal experiences. This study explores how teachers experience their spirituality in the classroom and how they give meaning to these experiences. IPA is therefore a natural fit as a method to explore spirituality within a meaning systems framework.

3.2 Ontology and Epistemology

For this study, a social constructivist lens was used. Social constructivism implies that meaning is constructed individually through social relationships without there existing one objective truth (Willig, 2001). This means that the research explores individual social constructions rather than objective facts. A social constructivist approach is less theory-driven and more explorative (Alvesson, 2009). It is also a relativist approach, situated in an epistemologically subjectivist and ontologically relativist framework (Langdridge, 2007). Epistemology is concerned with how we get to know something. Epistemological subjectivism implies that findings are at least partly also created by the researcher in the research process. Ontology is concerned with what there is to know, what reality consists of. Ontological relativism claims that realities are specific in nature, localized and dependent on the individual or group constructing them. These constructs are alterable and not true or false, but only more or less sophisticated or informed (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

A meanings system framework can be seen as a central part of a social constructivist epistemology. It is a framework concerned with perceiving, understanding and evaluating experience. It is specifically concerned with meaning-making, which is seen as central to human experience (Park, 2007). Its aim is to integrate experiences into a meaningful and coherent orienting system as well as to interpret experiences in light of that orienting system: “Meaning making involves the processes by which ...meanings are revised and the changes in meaning resulting from these processes.” (Park, 2011, p. 406). IPA in turn can be seen as a research method that explores and describes this meaning-making process. It is therefore also part of the constructivist epistemology and a lens through which the processes that take place within the

meanings system framework can be observed. The figure below shows the epistemological and analytical framework used for this study:

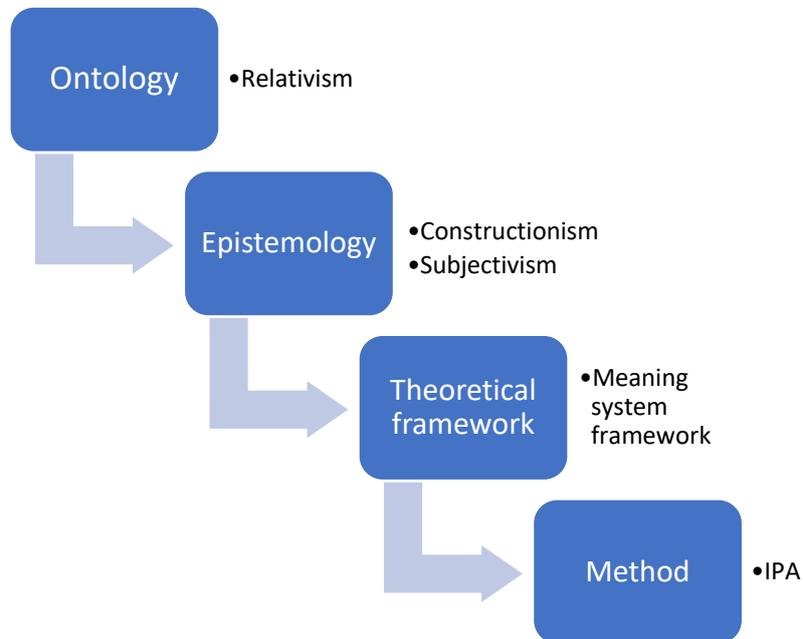


Figure 3.1 – Epistemological and Analytical Framework

When researching spirituality, it seems important to use such a constructivist, subjectivist and relativist approach because spiritual concepts such as transcendence, Higher Power etc. depend on personal and subjective views and experiences and cannot be assessed well within a positivist framework. They also vary widely amongst different people or people groups. They are constructed individually from personal experience. It is this experience that will be explored using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis.

3.3 Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) is a qualitative research method that was developed by Jonathan Smith in the mid-nineties in the UK (Landrige, 2007;

Smith, 1996). It is “concerned with the detailed examination of personal lived experience” (Eatough & Smith, 2017, p. 193) and the meaning that people ascribe to it.

IPA is a relatively new research methodology, but it has rich philosophical roots. IPA was originally used in health psychology studies but is now increasingly used in other fields as well such as education.

3.3.1 Theoretical foundations of IPA

The three main philosophical streams that have shaped IPA are phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography.

Phenomenology is a philosophical movement that was founded at the beginning of the 20th century by the German philosopher Edmund Husserl. He called phenomenology a “return to the things themselves” (as cited in Langdrige, 2007, p. 4) and was concerned with revealing the essence of experience or of the phenomenon. Other important protagonists of phenomenology were Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty. Heidegger coined the term intersubjectivity, meaning that experience is always in relation to something and a person is always a person-in-context and a being-in-the-world. (Smith et al., 2009). For IPA, this means that every experience needs to be seen as a meaning-making activity of a certain person in a certain context. Merleau-Ponty adds that knowledge is always situated and interpretative, and that one can never entirely share someone else’s experience (Langdrige, 2007). The implication for IPA is that the researcher is part of the meaning-making process and that someone else’s experience cannot be understood neutrally. Phenomenology studies human experience

with “a particular interest in thinking about what the experience of being human is like, in all of its various aspects, but especially in terms of the things which matter to us, and which constitute our lived world.” (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009, p. 11). While IPA’s goal is to elucidate a phenomenon, its interest is on how this phenomenon is experienced by a person embedded in a socio-historical and personal context (Eatough & Smith, 2017).

Understanding other people’s personal experiences is inevitably interpretative. This is where hermeneutics come into play. Hermeneutics is the theory of interpretation. For IPA, two important exponents in hermeneutical philosophy are Schleiermacher and Gadamer. Schleiermacher’s focus is on what interpretation can tell us about an individual, claiming that through an in-depth analysis of a text or interview, one can have “an understanding of the utterer better than he understands himself” (Schleiermacher, 1998, p. 266). Gadamer’s focus is on the text itself and how it is understood within the historical context in which it is read (Eatough & Smith, 2017). A key feature of IPA research is the hermeneutic circle. The hermeneutic circle describes the relationship between the whole and the parts. In order to understand the whole, you need to understand the parts and vice versa. Interpretation therefore becomes circular (Smith et al. 2009). Another important aspect is the double hermeneutic, where the researcher interprets the interpretation of the participant. Thus, the IPA researcher acknowledges that there are always assumptions, biases and preconceptions in play when conducting IPA research. A technique to avoid too much influence of the researcher’s preconceived ideas is called bracketing. Bracketing means suspending one’s own interpretations in order to let the phenomenon speak for itself (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). However, the concept of bracketing is contested

amongst practitioners. Some claim that bracketing is not possible at all (Langdrige, 2007, p. 22). In section 3.7, I describe how I attempted to bracket for this study.

The third philosophical stream that has shaped IPA is idiography. Idiography focuses on the particular and individual. According to Smith et al. (2009), this happens on two levels: a) idiography as a focus on detail and therefore a deep and thorough analysis b) idiography as a focus on the particular experience as experienced through a particular person in a particular context. The IPA researcher is interested in giving voice to the participants' concerns (Larkin, Watts & Clifton, 2006) and in uncovering the gems, these special passages that "offer analytic leverage, ...shine light on the phenomenon, on the transcript and on the corpus as a whole" (Smith, 2011, p. 7). This is why IPA generally uses small sample sizes and is not necessarily interested in generalizing the findings.

3.3.2 Rationale for Selecting IPA

I decided to choose IPA as my method of analysis because I believe that the phenomenological focus on lived experience, the hermeneutical focus on meaning-making and the idiographic focus on the individual make it a well-suited method for exploring the participants' spirituality. Spirituality is largely based on lived experiences and on how these experiences are interpreted by the individual.

West (2004) argues for using a qualitative phenomenological approach to capture the complex and multi-dimensional phenomenon of spirituality. IPA utilizes phenomenology in a holistic way. Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) state that "when people are having major experiences and facing big issues, the multidimensional

aspect of their response to that experience comes to the fore and so a holistic phenomenological analysis is particularly apposite” (p. 34). Accordingly, in IPA a person is seen in a holistic way as “a cognitive, linguistic, affective and physical being” (Smith & Osborn, 2015, p. 26), and IPA thus “assumes a chain of connection between people’s talk and their thinking and emotional state” (ibid). IPA is therefore not just interested in the cognitive entities, but also the emotional aspects of the experiences. According to Smith and Osborn (2004), “when an IPA researcher is looking at what a person is saying or writing, the researcher is concerned with trying to find out what that person thinks and feels about what they are talking about (p. 230).

Within IPA, lived experience is viewed as complex. Todres (2007) defines lived experience as embodied experience and phenomenological enquiry as embodied enquiry. Similarly, Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) see experience as “uniquely embodied, situated and perspectival. It is therefore amenable to an idiographic approach” (p. 29). Important for this study, the meanings-making process within IPA specifically includes the existential aspects of the experience: “Experience can be understood via an examination of the meanings which people impress upon it. These meanings, in turn, may illuminate the embodied, cognitive-affective and existential domains.” (ibid, p. 34). In light of this, various IPA researchers recommend the method for researching spirituality. Willig (2013) as well as Cassar and Shinebourne (2012) state that with a focus on lived experience, IPA is well suited for exploring perceptions of spirituality and spiritual well-being. Pietkiewicz and Smith (2014) find it a suitable method to “analyze spiritual experiences or religious rituals and meanings attributed to them” (p. 9). Murphy (2017) argues for the increased use of idiographic

methodologies in the research of spirituality because “for many individuals the unique and idiosyncratic aspects of their beliefs and practices are of great significance” (p. 2), and he suggests that IPA is particularly well suited for studying personal spirituality. A number of researchers have used IPA for researching spirituality (e.g. Flower, 2019; Jackson & Coyle, 2009; Vachon, Fillion & Achille, 2012).

IPA has also been used in a considerable amount of studies in the field of education, spirituality and identity. Noon (2018) recommends it for educational research and finds that “it may be a particularly useful methodology for researching individuals or groups of individuals whose voices may otherwise go unheard” (p. 80). That voices go unheard is also applicable to the present study of teacher spirituality. Examples of doctoral IPA theses with such a focus are Roop’s (2014) study of experiences and access of transgender students, Goodall’s (2014) exploration of designated teachers’ experiences of supporting looked after children or Willis’ (2017) investigation of teaching assistants’ experiences of forming relationships with pupils who have autistic spectrum disorder.

In addition, Smith (2019) observed, when reviewing a series of IPA studies, that their focus is often on identity: “The experiential significance of an event considered in an IPA study often slips over into a concern with the significance for the person’s identity.” (p. 168). Good examples for the context of the present study is Brown and Heck’s (2018) exploration of the construction of teacher identity and Wood, Farmer and Goodall’s (2016) study of changing teacher identity.

I was also able to identify successful IPA studies with a focus on teacher spirituality. Gillespie's (2019) doctoral thesis investigated primary school teachers' understanding and expression of spirituality. Schwebel (2017) examined primary school teachers' perspectives of spirituality and well-being and Merwe and Habron (2018) explored the lived experience of spirituality amongst music teachers.

3.3.3 Limitations of IPA

The literature on IPA highlights three major limitations. The first has to do with language. The intent of IPA is to receive insight into people's experiences by analyzing their spoken accounts and the descriptions of their experiences. This necessitates that the participants are able to give voice to these experiences, something that can be difficult when talking about spirituality. Willig (2001) points out that this can be a challenge especially when people are not used to describing such experiences. Smith et al. (2009) state that IPA is "inevitably 'always already' enmeshed with language" (p. 194). Interpretations of experiences are therefore not only shaped but also limited by language (ibid, 2009). Again, in light of the description of the spiritual, the participants may not have the vocabulary to adequately describe their experiences in a way that would feel adequate to them.

A second limitation is due to homogeneity. This is pointed out e.g. by Pringle, Drummond, McLafferty and Hendry (2011). Because IPA works with relatively homogenous groups, transferability as well as generalization of claims can be limited. Smith and Osborn (2007) suggest a "theoretical rather than empirical generalizability" (p. 56) where readers can make links between the research findings, their personal and professional experience and the existing research literature. Alternatively, more

similar studies with other groups would need to be conducted in order to allow for greater generalizability. Specifically for this study, the relatively homogenous sample of six Swiss Christian secondary school teachers limits generalization in the following ways:

a) the link between spirituality and religiosity: Because all teachers identified as both spiritual and religious, the findings about spirituality are limited to teachers who are both spiritual and religious. This means that when the findings are presented, spirituality needs to always be seen as overlapping with Christian religion.

b) spirituality and non-Western traditions: The findings are clearly limited to a Western expression of Christian spirituality. No claims about non-Western spirituality can be made.

c) the secondary school focus: Because all participants were secondary school teachers, the findings are limited to teachers who teach in secondary schools. Spirituality may be expressed and experienced quite differently on other school levels, i.e. when working with younger children or with adults.

The third major limitation is about interpretation. The researcher has a very active role in interpreting the participant's account of an experience. Some critics claim that in the final write-up of the research, the researcher may be reflected as much as the researched (Brocki & Wearden, 2006). Similarly, Murray and Holmes (2014) question the applicability of Smith's requirement that the researcher needs to approach interview data "without being influenced by a specific preexisting formal theoretical

position” (2004, p. 45). They wonder if the researcher can suspend his or her theoretical lens and approach the data neutrally.

In choosing IPA as my research method, I have attempted to limit the impact of these limitations by a) conducting repeat interviews that will allow the participants to reflect on the topic and find ways to articulate their experiences, b) clearly stating that generalization of the results of this research can only be analytical in nature (generalization to theory), and c) giving insight into my personal involvement with the topic at hand by conducting a reflexivity exercise (see introduction section 1.6 and appendix VI).

3.4 Research Questions

The main research question of this study is: How does the spirituality of highly spiritual teachers influence their pedagogy in Swiss public secondary schools? This main question is divided into three sub-questions: 1) How do highly spiritual teachers define their own spirituality? 2) How has this spirituality impacted their identity as teachers? 3) How has their spirituality impacted their pedagogical practice and their relationships within the school? The study attempts to identify positive and problematic aspects of spirituality in Swiss public secondary schools and how these affect who the teachers are (teacher identity) and how they teach (pedagogical practice).

3.5 Research Design

The design for this research project was to conduct two semi-structured interviews with each of the six participants and to analyze them according to IPA principles.

The sample size of six is according to Smith, Flowers and Larkin's (2009, p. 52) recommendation for PhD studies. They write that "it is more problematic to try to meet IPA's commitments with a sample which is 'too large' than with one that is 'too small'" (ibid, p. 51).

Flowers (2008) highlights the advantages of repeat interviews with the same participants: maximizing depth and increasing opportunity for probing, trust and rapport between interviewer and participant. Similarly, Vincent (2013) states that "the key benefits of repeat interviews relate to the quality of the relationship that developed with participants over time...and the way in which they allowed the researcher to seek clarification or additional information about issues raised in earlier interviews." (p. 341) In agreement with Vincent's (2013) conclusion that repeat interviews are "particularly appropriate for research that deals with vulnerable populations and sensitive issues" (p. 341), I felt that this would be especially important when talking about a very personal, at times vulnerable, subject like spirituality. A gap of three to five months between interviews would allow enough time for the participants to reflect on the initial interview questions within their professional practice and context, but not too much time so that they would still remember the first interview quite well. A second round of interviews would allow for more depth because a certain basic trust would have been established. In addition, a first round of data analysis would allow for targeted probing and for seeking clarification in the areas that stood out to me.

For the semi-structured interviews, I developed a draft interview schedule which I piloted with a secondary school teacher who self-identified as highly spiritual through

the spirituality assessment questionnaires (see section recruitment 3.6.1). I then modified the schedule according to the insights gained from the pilot interview and the feedback received from my supervisor in order to write the final interview schedule (see appendix V).

3.6 Participants

3.6.1 Recruitment

After having received ethical approval from the Lancaster University Ethics Committee on November 13, 2017, I started recruiting participants through my professional network. Because I had previously been teaching at various Swiss secondary schools, I am well connected with various teachers and school principals in the region. In a first round, I sent out a recruitment email to them with the question as to whether they knew someone at their school who they thought might see themselves as a highly spiritual person. However, I did not recruit any participants at schools where I had previously worked to prevent recruiting former colleagues. In a second round, I sent out recruiting emails (appendix I) to all the high schools in the region of Baselland in Switzerland. Through these recruitment emails, I received various contact suggestions whom I then contacted with an email invitation to participate in the study (appendix I). I then met with each teacher who was interested in participating soon after hearing of their interest to explain the study in greater detail. I had the ones who agreed to participate read the participant information sheet (appendix II) and sign the consent form (appendix III). I then asked them to fill in two spirituality assessment questionnaires (appendix IV, see also section 3.6.1.1 and 3.6.1.2) in order to assess more objectively if their self-assessment as “highly spiritual” would be confirmed by validated instruments. I continued this process of

contacting and recruiting teachers until I had six participants who scored high on the two assessments.

Using such quantitative spirituality assessments in the recruitment process was a suggestion made by the Department of Educational Research at Lancaster University when approving my research proposal. However, assessing spirituality is a controversial endeavor in itself. This is largely due to the definitional issues described earlier. The complexity of the term has led to a vast number of measures to assess spirituality and religiousness. Hill and Hood (1999) compiled a book of 125 different instruments. Various reviews (e.g. de Jager Meezenbroek et al., 2012; King & Crowther, 2004) analyze the different instruments that were predominantly developed in a North American context, all coming to similar conclusions that the diversity of spirituality definitions produces a great heterogeneity of results. Koenig (2008) cautions that

[many of] these measures are heavily contaminated with questions assessing positive character traits or mental health: optimism, forgiveness, gratitude, meaning and purpose in life, peacefulness, harmony, and general well-being....Either spirituality should be defined and measured in traditional terms as a unique, uncontaminated construct, or it should be eliminated from use in academic research. (p. 349)

Despite this controversy, assessing spirituality has become an important aspect in various disciplines. For example, Monod, Brennan, Rochat, Martin, Rochat and Büla (2011) reviewed the most commonly used spirituality assessment instruments and their usefulness for spiritual interventions within psychiatric care.

While I agree with Zwingmann and Klein (2012) that questionnaires can only measure the diversity and depth of spirituality roughly and partially, for this study I assumed that to prevent selection bias, using spirituality measures with the participants would generate a more objective assessment of their spirituality rather than solely relying on self-attribution. I followed the recommendation of Zwingmann and Klein (2012) who had reviewed and categorized the existing validated German questionnaires to measure spirituality and religiousness. In the category of “intensity / centrality of spirituality”, they recommend the spirituality and the religion part of the LeBe assessment (Schnell & Becker, 2007) and the TPV scale (Belschner, 2000) because both measures are independent of institutionalized religion. I used these measures solely as a way of checking and validating the participants’ self-identification as highly spiritual. The goal was not to collect additional data to be used in the analysis process of this study.

3.6.1.1 LeBe Assessment

The *Fragebogen zu Lebensbedeutung und Lebenssinn* (LeBe) is an instrument that was developed in German by Schnell and Becker (2007) and later also translated into English (Sources of Meaning and Meaning in Life Questionnaire SoMe, Schnell, 2009). It is a 151-item questionnaire that includes 26 domains of life. The items are rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale from one (“not true at all”) to five (“entirely true”). The spirituality domain consists of 5 items and the religion domain of 3 items (see appendix IV). They have a good overall reliability (Cronbach’s Alpha = .81) and validity (Zwingmann & Klein, 2012). The LeBe is a fitting instrument for this study because it not only measures the centrality and intensity of the participants’ spirituality, but also the centrality and intensity of their religiosity separate from

spirituality. It thus shows whether participants see themselves as only spiritual or as spiritual and religious.

3.6.1.2 TPV Scale

The scale *Transpersonales Vertrauen* (TPV, transpersonal trust scale; see appendix IV) is an eleven-item questionnaire developed in German by Belschner (2000). The items are rated on a 4-point Likert-type scale from zero (“not true at all”) to three (“entirely true”). It is a fitting instrument for assessing spirituality in this study because it has an excellent reliability (Cronbach’s Alpha = .94; Zwingmann & Klein, 2012) and good validity (Albani, Bailer, Blaser, Geyer, Brähler & Grulke, 2002). The scale has been widely used in spirituality research in German.

Since both scales do not include a normative value of who is considered “highly spiritual”, I decided to only select participants who would score in the top 25% of each measure. That means at least an average of 4 (on a scale from 1 to 5) on the LeBe spirituality assessment and a 2.25 (on a scale from 0 to 3) on the TPV scale.

3.6.2 Description of Participants

The participants of this study were all native Swiss secondary school teachers who self-identify as highly spiritual. Their spirituality assessment scores are shown in table 3.1 (A more detailed description of each participant can be found in section 3.8.1)

Name (pseudonym)	Religious Affiliation	TPV Score	LeBe Score Religiosity	LeBe Score Spirituality
Elena	evangelical	2.8	5	5

Beatrice	charismatic	2.6	5	5
Matt	charismatic	2.7	4.7	4.8
Dean	protestant	2.7	5	5
Luke	evangelical	2.6	5	4.8
Rolf	protestant	2.3	5	5
Average		2.6	4.95	4.93

Table 3.1 – Participant Demographics

All teachers who agreed to participate scored very high in both the spirituality as well as in the religiosity assessment. They were therefore all both spiritual and religious. They all had a similar socio-economic background (upper middleclass) and religious affiliation (Christian). This was not intended in the recruitment process. The initial goal was to also recruit teachers with a different religious background or teachers who self-identify as highly spiritual but not religious. I made considerable efforts to recruit non-Christian teachers (writing to various faith-communities, asking friends to recruit in their networks), but the few that did signal interest in participating withdrew their participation at or before the introductory meeting for various reasons. There was one teacher who identified as Buddhist. She withdrew when she found out that my personal background was Christian and that only few non-Christian teachers had come forward. One teacher who identified as “secular, but spiritual” initially signaled interest, but then cancelled the introductory meeting without giving a specific reason. A third teacher who identified as “spiritual and interested in various religions” withdrew by explaining that he did not really have the time for the interviews. It is possible that one or more of these teachers withdrew because they did not want to take a spirituality assessment. However, because this requirement was clearly stated in the

Participant Information Sheet (appendix II), I do not believe that this was the main reason for withdrawal. The fact that I could only recruit Christian teachers has most likely to do with two reasons: 1) There are few teachers in Switzerland with a migration background. Most teachers are therefore at least by affiliation Christian. It therefore makes sense that the highly spiritual ones have an affiliation to the Christian faith; 2) secular spirituality is often seen as esoteric and somewhat “weird”. There may have been a greater hurdle for secular spiritual teachers to come forward and volunteer to be interviewed.

While it seemed at first somewhat unfortunate to not have a wider variety of spiritual expressions represented in the sample, there are also advantages to this. IPA generally uses purposive sampling of fairly homogenous groups because having a group “as uniform as possible ... one can then examine in detail the psychological variability within the group, by analysing the pattern of convergence and divergence which arises” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 50). In this regard, the unintended additional homogeneity of participants helped to make the analysis more valid. In this regard, I was content with the recruitment process and would do it in the same way again. However, the results also only apply to this specific group and no claims about spirituality in education can be generally made. It is also important to note that while all participants are Christian, they do not represent all Christian denominations. Due to the small sample sizes, IPA studies do not work with representative samples. Again, the findings of this study must therefore be seen as specific to these Christian teachers and cannot be generalized to all Christian teachers.

3.7 Researcher

Generally in qualitative research and particularly in IPA research, where the active role of the researcher as a “meaning-maker” within the double-hermeneutic is acknowledged, it is important to be transparent about who the researcher is and what biases he or she might bring to the analytical process (Brocki & Wearden, 2006; Smith, 2011). Langdrige (2007) writes that

it is important to inform the reader of the position of the researcher with regard to the specific topic being investigated. This information must be sufficient for a reader to be able to tune into the particular position of the researcher and the ways in which this position might have influenced the findings. (p. 61)

In light of this, I have decided to both do a reflexivity exercise (appendix VI) and write the section below to describe my personal position about the topic under investigation.

As stated in the introduction (see section 1.6), I have worked both in state schools and faith-based schools as a secondary school teacher. I consider myself a spiritual person and my personal spirituality is important to me. I am also affiliated with the Christian faith and go to church regularly, but would consider myself non-denominational and theologically very liberal. I therefore bring an insider perspective to this research project. I too have struggled with the questions of how to incorporate my personal spirituality in the classroom in a meaningful way. Some of the research questions have arisen from personal experience. An insider perspective invariably comes with advantages and disadvantages. The reflexivity exercise helped me to reflect on these. A major advantage that I became aware of during the exercise was that it would be easier for me to make sense of the participants’ accounts, to understand their spiritual and theological language. I believe that the insider perspective helped in the

interpretation process. I was able to stay close to the original meaning of the utterances and could intuitively comprehend what they meant. Another advantage I saw was that I know the Swiss school system really well, because I have been a Swiss high school teacher for a total of about 10 years. It helped to create empathy with the participants, that I experienced myself how conversations feel like about touchy subjects with the different stakeholders within schools. I felt that I could, to a certain degree, identify with many of the experiences that the participants had had.

On the other hand, I realized through the exercise that there would be certain disadvantages. One was the danger of over-interpreting the participants' accounts through my own experiences and through a sensed over-familiarity with the topic. I realized that I needed to be very careful to bracket off as much as possible my own experiences. What helped me in learning how to bracket was the realization that despite my role as an insider, there were still considerable differences between myself and the participants. The main difference was that I do not consider myself a highly spiritual person. I do not interpret all of life through a spiritual lens. For example, I do not believe in direct divine guidance or intervention or the possibility of accessing divine wisdom in a way some of the participants do. I also have a different understanding of prayer. I see prayer more as a meditative practice, as contemplation. I do not believe that prayer can somehow invoke a divine being who then intervenes. I believe much more that prayer mainly changes the one who prays. I do not pray for my students and I do not pray while I am at school. Spirituality is more compartmentalized in my life than in the participants' lives. It is more of an add-on for me. Recalling these key differences during the analysis and interpretation process helped me to understand that the participants interpret some of their experiences in

ways that are outside of my own personal understanding. This in return helped me to be aware that my own experiences and interpretations might be misleading and thus to bracket them off in an attempt to continuously view the participants' experiences with "fresh eyes".

The reflexivity exercise also helped me to reflect on how various other identity factors might influence the relationship with the participants and the data analysis. As far as my socio-economic and professional status is concerned, I am very similar to the participants. I believe that this helped me in connecting quite quickly with them. I think that they were willing to open up about school experiences more easily to a fellow high school teacher.

As a Protestant with quite liberal theological views, my general theological understanding proved to be quite different from the participants'. I realized in the interview process that I often thought to myself: "Oh, that is an interesting view, I would have explained this quite differently". I believe that these surprising moments also helped in bracketing off my own understanding. On the other hand, I think that the participants knew that I was also interested in spirituality and that I also had a Christian religious background which was helpful for connecting with them.

I had assumed that being a male researcher might lead to the female participants being more guarded during the interview process. However, I felt that both Elena and Beatrice were very open and vulnerable in their sharing, with Beatrice even becoming quite emotional when recalling a key spiritual experience at school. Concerning the analysis, I am aware that I brought my maleness into the process and that the female

participants may experience spirituality differently than the males. However, the strong presence of the themes across all of the participants' accounts shows that there are also important communalities.

3.8 Data Collection and Transcription

3.8.1 First Round of Interviews

I conducted and audio-recorded an initial semi-structured interview with each of the six participants in a time span of approximately 4 months between November 2017 and March 2018. The six interviews were quite different in length, quality and interview dynamic. The average interview time was approximately 70 minutes.

Interview 1 – Elena. Elena is a 37-year old special education teacher with 10 years of teaching experience. She is ethnically South-East Asian, married and has a young toddler. Her infant son was present during the interview which led to a few interruptions. I experienced Elena as very passionate about her spirituality and her work. The interview was quite lively. Elena had obviously already reflected on the topic quite a bit and could clearly formulate her views and standpoints.

Interview 2 – Beatrice. Beatrice is a 33-year old language, history and home economics teacher with 7 years of teaching experience. She is married without children. She was a bit more tentative in the interview, at times unsure what her own thoughts were on the topic or how to articulate them. The interview was a quite vulnerable experience for her. At one point, she teared up as she reflected on an especially meaningful experience with one of her school classes.

Interview 3 – Matt. Matt is a 34-year old science and physical education teacher with 10 years of teaching experience. He is also married without children. Matt's interview was by far the shortest. His answers were well thought through; at times he would make long pauses to reflect before answering. Some of his answers were very short. I experienced him as very concise and not as someone who would enjoy sharing a lot of stories and experiences in great detail.

Interview 4 – Dean. Dean is a 55-year old Swiss language teacher. He is married with one adult daughter. He has more than 30 years of teaching experience. The interview with Dean felt quite different because he had a wealth of experiences, insights and wisdom to share. The interview with him was by far the longest. He shared eloquently and at times in great detail. He seemed to have come to terms with how he could and wanted to incorporate his personal spirituality into his teaching.

Interview 5 – Luke. Luke is a 39-year old music teacher with 12 years of teaching experience. He is married with two children. Luke is also a part-time professional drummer. I appreciated the depth and thoughtfulness with which he shared during the interview. I realized that as a musician, he had quite a different approach to teaching and also a bit of a different access to students.

Interview 6 – Rolf: Rolf is a 48-year old geography and physical education teacher, married with three teenaged children, with 22 years of teaching experience. What stood out in Rolf's interview was that his answers and reflections were quite direct. He seemed to have reflected on the interview topic prior to the interview and had his

answers ready for the different questions. He seemed to be quite sure of how much he wanted to incorporate his spirituality into his teaching and why.

After each interview, I transcribed the audio-recording verbatim. It was important to me to do this transcription within the week immediately following the interview in order to remember the interview process well while transcribing. This transcription process in itself was already an initial step toward analyzing the data because certain interesting utterances, experiences or concepts started to stand out to me.

After I had gathered and transcribed all six first-round interviews, I conducted a preliminary analysis of the interviews. I read through the transcripts, highlighted sections that stood out to me or sections where I felt I would need more clarification. Out of this preliminary analysis, I compiled specific interview questions for each of the six participants for the second round of interviews.

3.8.2 Second Round of Interviews

From April 2018 until June 2018, I conducted a second interview with each participant. As described earlier, the timing of this second round of interviews seemed appropriate to allow for enough reflection time while not being too far apart in time. During the second interview, participants often referred to the first interview and said that they had already talked about certain things. While the rapport that had been established during the first interview round helped in some interviews to set a more relaxed tone, the amount of new insights gained by the participants or further experiences recounted remained limited. While I had expected a bit more, this fact helped me to see that a certain saturation of data had been achieved in the interviews.

The average interview time for the second round was only about 30 minutes per interview. It seemed to me that the participants had already told most of their stories and shared their most interesting insights during the initial interview. However, it was helpful to have the opportunity to clarify certain aspects that remained unclear from the first round. Also, the second round highlighted that for the participants, the first interviews had animated them to reflect on the topic of spirituality in their pedagogical practice. Reporting on these reflections was a major component of the second round of interviews.

3.9 Data Analysis

After the second round of interviews, I conducted an in-depth analysis of the complete set of interview data. The data analysis was based on the IPA principles laid out by Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009). This analytical process was guided by the five-stage model proposed by Langdridge (2007) which is summarized in table 3.2:

<i>For each individual account</i>	
Stage 1	Reading and re-reading transcript, adding comments in the right-hand margin
Stage 2	Identifying emerging themes and noting them in left-hand margin
Stage 3	Structuring themes into superordinate themes
Stage 4	Naming themes and connecting them with quotations
<i>For all accounts together</i>	
Stage 5	Identifying overarching meta-themes

Table 3.2 – IPA Stages of Analysis

In the initial stage, I read and re-read the transcripts several times. This helped me to get back into the flow of the interview. As a second step, I then coded the text by adding comments in the right-hand margin of the transcript, with the initial “aim simply to state what is going on in the text” (Langdrige, 2007, p. 111). Comments were all written in German and color-coded according to the following three categories, as suggested by Smith et al. (2009): 1) Descriptive comments (blue) which focus on the content, on what was said; 2) linguistic comments (red) which focus on how the participants said something; and 3) conceptual comments (green) which focus on a conceptual level and already include some interpretation. I repeated this process until I felt that I had explored the text in great detail. This initial coding was a very time-consuming and detailed task.

In a second stage, I identified themes (emergent themes) and noted them in the left-hand margin of the transcript. This was a more reflected and broader analysis of the data, “using key words to capture the essential quality” (Smith, Jarman & Osborn., 1999, p. 221) of what I found in the text. According to Smith et al. (2009), the goal here is to “reduce the volume of detail...whilst maintaining complexity” (p. 91). Example pages of stages one and two of the analysis process can be seen in appendix VII.

In a third stage, I wrote the emergent themes that I had identified in a separate table in chronological order to graphically represent the structure of the themes (see example in appendix VIII). I looked for connections between them and clustered them into overarching concepts, called superordinate themes (Smith et al., 2009). This required

revisiting the transcripts at different points to better structure the themes (Langdrige, 2007).

The fourth stage consisted of naming the themes “which seem to capture most strongly the respondent’s concerns” (Smith, Jarman & Osborn, 1999, p. 223) and connecting them with appropriate quotations from the text. I then compiled the superordinate themes in a) a table for each participant (see example in appendix IX) and b) a table per theme across all cases (see example in appendix X).

I used this four-stage process for each interview separately. Then, in a final stage, I identified meta-themes that appeared in all or a majority of the interviews (Appendix XI). This process was “cyclical and iterative, continually returning to the data to check meaning and confirm interpretations”. (Langdrige, 2007, p. 111). I engaged in reflexivity activities before, during, and after the analysis process.

For the write-up, I chose a limited number of significant meta-themes that were present in all accounts. The write-up was a continuation of the interpretation process, whereby my selections as well as the translation of the quotes from German into English influenced the final research findings.

I conducted the analysis “by hand” with colored pens, printouts of the transcripts and scissors. I did not use any qualitative data analysis software. The process of noting directly on paper, of color-coding by hand and of finally cutting up the transcripts and arranging them according to themes felt more natural and immediate to me than using software and is in line with Smith et al.’s (2009) recommendation.

3.10 Translation Issues in Qualitative Research

It is largely agreed upon in the literature on translation in qualitative research that it is important to explicitly reflect on the act of translating and to describe the role of the researcher in the translation process (Squires, 2009; Temple & Young, 2004; Van Nes, Abma, Jonsson & Deeg, 2010). This is especially necessary when working within a constructivist paradigm where translation is seen as an interpretive act (Van Nes et al., 2010). Gawlewicz (2016), who specifically looked at translation issues in research where the researcher shares the native language with the participants, points out that “translators are continuously involved in making choices about how to represent people” (p. 31) and that they need “awareness of possible change in meaning or potential construction of new meanings” (p. 31). Temple and Young (2004) argue that

the translator always makes her mark on the research, whether this is acknowledged or not, and in effect, some kind of ‘hybrid’ role emerges in that, at the very least, the translator makes assumptions about meaning equivalence that make her an analyst and cultural broker as much as a translator. (p. 171)

Within an IPA framework, such an act of interpretation is already assumed in the double-hermeneutic of the researcher’s interpretation of the participants’ interpretations of their experiences. Because the act of translating is seen as an act of interpretation, Van Nes et al. (2010) recommend that if the researcher and the participants speak the same native language, but the research will be reported in English, the researcher should stay in the original language as long and as much as possible. This means that interviews, data transcription and interpretation should all

happen in the original language. This is especially important for phenomenological studies. Squire (2009) argues that in phenomenological qualitative research, data collection and analysis must take place in the language of the participant “because phenomenological studies require an intense, exact focus on how participants use language to describe their experiences and language is a part of the identity of the person experiencing the phenomenon” (p. 5). Van Nes et al. (2010) point to the difficulty of translating quotations of participants and argue that some passages are untranslatable without loss of meaning.

Temple and Young (2004) reflect on the role of researcher as translator. They point out some advantages when the researcher is fluent in the participants’ language (e.g. questions about meaning can more easily be asked), but recognize that

this researcher/translator role is inextricably bound also to the socio-cultural positioning of the researcher, a positioning, whether intended or ascribed, that will also give a meaning to the dual translator/researcher role. That meaning shifts with insider/outsider status ... and is in turn linked to how the validity of the work is itself constructed. (p. 168)

For this study, based on the methodological points raised and recommendations discussed above, I decided to:

- 1) Stay as long as possible in the participants’ language and collect, transcribe and analyze interview data in German, which is also my own native language. The advantage here was that I could stay both with the original interview text and in my native language throughout the entire analysis process and thus not lose or change any of the meaning in the act of translation before the analysis process was completed.

2) Translate into English only the quotations and theme names used in the written report of the study results and in the appendix tables. For greater validity, I have had a native English speaker with excellent German language skills check all the translated quotes for accuracy. I believe that the later the researcher translates, the fewer ambiguous decisions need to be made. However, when translating, it was always important to go back to the context in which the quotes were found.

3) Reflect on my status as a researcher/translator: I believe that I am of similar social-economical background as the research participants. Having been a secondary school teacher for many years myself, I feel that I have an insider status within the group of participants. As far as language competencies go, I have lived and worked in North America for many years and am married to an American woman. English is the language we speak in our family. As an IPA researcher with a constructivist epistemological perspective, I understand my translating activity as an additional step of interpretation.

4) Reflect on language: An advantage in the translation from German to English is that grammar and sentence structure as well as parts of the vocabulary are quite similar. Words such as *Religiosität* (religiosity) or *Spiritualität* (spirituality) can easily be translated without losing any of the meaning. Also, being an insider to the topic of spirituality and having lived in North America, I have a familiarity with spiritual and religious terms both in German and in English. However, there are some clear disadvantages of having to translate some of the data into English. Certain words remain ambiguous, such as the German word *Glaube*, where I had to make an

analytical decision and assign the English term either for *faith* or for *belief*, which obviously have different meanings and connotations. Nevertheless, I believe that when considering the context of the word, the most likely correct term can usually be found.

3.11 Ethical Considerations

I agree with Qu and Dumay (2011) that “we cannot lift the results of interviewing out of the contexts in which they were gathered and claim them as objective data with no strings attached” (p. 238). There were possibly power dynamics happening during the interviewing process (Anyan, 2013). Interview participants may have reported what they believed I wanted to hear. Also, my personal experiences may have influenced the data collection and interpretation. I tried to mitigate these effects by briefing the participants well in a meeting prior to data collection and by conducting a reflexivity exercise (according to the guidelines laid out by Langdridge, 2007). I sought to minimize personal bias, despite Finlay’s (2002) concerns that “when it comes to practice, the process of engaging in reflexivity is perilous, full of muddy ambiguity and multiple trails” (p. 212).

The study was performed in accordance with British Psychological Society’s Code of Human Research Ethics (BPS, 2014) and ethical approval was granted by the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences and Lancaster Management School Research Ethics Committee on the 13th of November 2017. I obtained a fully informed written consent from each participant. The participants were informed of the content of the research via invitation email and through a pre-interview face to face meeting. The research did not engage in deception. The participants were informed of their right of withdrawal

in the invitation email, in the pre-interview meeting and in the debriefing after the interview. The participants had the right to withdraw at any point prior to or during the study (and up to two weeks after data collection) without disadvantage to themselves and without obligation to give a reason. Anonymity and confidentiality were guaranteed to the participants. Names of participants and places were changed in transcripts. Transcripts were stored securely in a password-protected folder on the Lancaster University server and are only made available to the project supervisor and examiners.

Protection of participants was ensured. Interviews took place at the researcher's office in Liestal, Switzerland, at the participant's school or at the participant's home. No harm was done to participants or the researcher. At the end of the interview, the participants were debriefed. Time for questions was given and they were reminded of their right of withdrawal and about what would happen to the interview data. The participants were not remunerated for their participation.

One potential ethical question that had arisen in the research design stage was that some participants might be deemed unsuitable for participation in the interview rounds due to their low score in the spirituality assessments. Participants were therefore thoroughly briefed prior to data collection that there might be a chance they would not be able to participate in the interviews. Luckily, no one had to be turned away because all participants who took the spirituality assessment also scored sufficiently high. All other people who were initially interested in participating in the study withdrew prior to taking the assessment (see section 3.6.2).

3.12 Evaluating Quality in IPA Research

Smith et al. (2009) remind us that IPA is a creative process that does not need to follow a rule book. Its quality may therefore be more difficult to evaluate than the quality of quantitative research. Assessing quality is nevertheless important. Smith (2011) offers useful criteria for evaluating IPA research through the “IPA quality evaluation guide” (p. 17). According to the guide, IPA research needs to:

- a) Clearly subscribe to the philosophical principles of phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography.
- b) Be sufficiently transparent so that the reader can understand what was done.
- c) Provide a sufficiently interpretative analysis that is coherent and plausible.
- d) Contain sufficient quotes to show that the themes are dense enough within the corpus of the text. For a sample size of N=6, he recommends extracts from at least three participants for each theme.

Brocki and Wearden (2006) conducted a review of 52 IPA studies to evaluate quality in IPA research. Adding to Smith et al.’s (2009) guidelines, they recommend that “including more acknowledgement of analysts’ preconceptions and beliefs and reflexivity might increase transparency and even enhance the account’s rhetorical power.” (p. 101). Similarly, Langdrige (2007) suggests the use of a reflexivity journal when conducting IPA research with a set of questions to be used before data collection, during data analysis and after the study is completed.

For this study, I have tried to follow these various guidelines and recommendations. I have included a section about myself as a researcher (see introduction section 1.6),

conducted a reflexivity exercise (appendix VI), attempted to describe the process of analysis transparently (see also appendices VII – XI), and included extracts from at least three participants for each theme (see tables 4.1 – 4.5).

3.13 Chapter Summary

This methodology chapter described the method of IPA with its epistemological and ontological underpinnings, positioning it within a meaning-systems framework. Reasons were given why IPA it is a good fit for the present study: it explores lived experiences and the participants' meaning-making process. The chapter then described the entire research process, starting with participant recruitment and description of the participants, then data collection and data analysis. Translation issues in qualitative research as well as ethical considerations were also highlighted. Finally, a section was dedicated to evaluation quality in IPA research. The next chapter will present the findings of this study, grouped into four meta-themes.

4 Findings

4.1 Introduction

This chapter will present the findings of the interview data analysis. This represents the final step of the IPA method. A separate section is dedicated to each meta-theme that was identified in the data.

The chapter is structured around the research sub-questions, which are:

- 1) How do highly spiritual teachers define their own spirituality?
- 2) How has this spirituality impacted their identity as teachers?
- 3) How has their spirituality impacted their pedagogical work and their relationships within the school?

For each meta-theme, there is an overview table indicating the prevalence of the subordinate themes in the various interviews. In these tables, the number stands for the number of times the theme came up for each participant during the interviews; the *n* stands for *not prevalent*. This gives an impression of the prominence of the individual themes. E.g. the theme of “deliberate restraint” came up a total of 21 times in the interviews, followed by “importance of prayer” (16 times) and “resource against stress” (12 times). In contrast, the influence of spirituality on pedagogical views only came up 5 times. These overview tables are concise versions of what is shown in greater detail in appendices IX - XI. It is important to note that most subordinate themes were identified multiple times in each interview. Due to space limitations, only one quote per participant and subordinate theme could be directly stated. All direct quotes in the findings section have been translated from German into English.

The first number after each quote indicates whether it is from the first or the second interview, the second number indicates the starting line of the quote in the transcript.

It will be helpful for the reader to have briefly re-introduced the participants of this study who have been portrayed in greater detail in the methodology chapter (see table 3.1 and section 3.8.1). This contributes to being aware of and keeping in mind the individual differences amongst the teachers while focusing on the common themes in the interviews:

- Elena (evangelical Christian) is a 37-year-old special education teacher with 10 years of teaching experience.
- Beatrice (charismatic Christian) is a 32-year-old language, history and home economics teacher with 7 years of teaching experience.
- Matt (charismatic Christian) is a 33-year-old math, biology and sports teacher with 10 years of teaching experience.
- Dean (protestant Christian) is a 55-year-old Latin and French teacher with 30 years of teaching experience.
- Luke (evangelical Christian) is a 39-year-old music teacher with 12 years of teaching experience.
- Rolf (protestant Christian) is a 48-year-old geography and sports teacher with 22 years of teaching experience.

It will also be helpful to reiterate the homogeneity and therefore the limitations of the sample of six Swiss Christian secondary school teachers (as described in section 3.3.2): a) spirituality always overlaps with Christian religiosity for these teachers, b)

they clearly come out of a Western Christian spiritual tradition and c) they only teach on the secondary school level.

4.2 Meta-Theme One: SPIRITUALITY’S KEY ROLE IN TEACHERS’ LIVES

For this study, teachers who self-identified as highly spiritual and who scored high on the LeBe assessment and the TPV scale were purposely selected. It is therefore not surprising that spirituality would play a key role in their lives and that – as shown in table 4.1 – the subordinate themes were identified in each interview.

<i>Subordinate Theme</i>	<i>Elena</i>	<i>Beatrice</i>	<i>Matt</i>	<i>Dean</i>	<i>Luke</i>	<i>Rolf</i>	<i>Total</i>
Centrality	1	1	1	1	1	1	6
Connection	1	1	1	1	1	1	6
Spirituality vs. Religiosity	1	2	1	1	1	1	7

Table 4.1 – Subordinate Themes for Meta-Theme One

What stands out from the interviews is that despite the fact that spirituality is so important to these teachers, they all find it quite difficult to define or put in words what exactly they mean by spirituality. The subordinate themes chosen below therefore do not reflect the entire breadth of what spirituality means to every individual teacher, but rather the common elements that are present in the descriptions or definitions of each participant. Because spirituality is so personal and at times difficult to define, it seems important to tease out the characteristics that define spirituality for these teachers in order to then see how and why this has an impact on their teaching and why it also leads to various tensions within a school context.

It is necessary to reiterate here that all participating teachers are Christians from various denominational backgrounds (see table 3.1). As shown in the literature review (section 2.2), a clear differentiation between spirituality and religiosity is not always possible. While the participants clearly differentiate the two terms when asked to define them (section 4.2.3), their accounts show an interrelatedness between their personal spirituality and religious views and beliefs. While the participants mostly used the word spirituality, some of them would also use the term faith and more defined Christian concepts such as God or Holy Spirit when talking about their spirituality.

4.2.1 Spirituality is Central in the Teacher's Life

All six teachers reiterated during the interview process how important spirituality was to them and how much it permeated all aspects of their lives. Dean expressed this very clearly

Of course, when you are a believer, spirituality is central. Yes, absolutely central. I found faith when I was in High School. Since then, spirituality has been important to me. (Dean, 1.33)

He then went on to describe how his spirituality provided some structure to his life with a devotional time in the morning, a meditative exercise during his commute and silent prayer times during the school breaks. In the evenings, he would again bring all the difficult things of the day to God.

Elena expressed that spirituality, while always important, became especially important to her when she was not doing so well.

The importance of spirituality in my life is high, yes very high. If I am honest, it's a bit higher in times when I'm not doing so well than in times when I feel that I have everything under control. (Elena, 1.73)

Her description indicated a deep trust that her spiritual connection to God would provide support and guidance in all life circumstances.

Luke's and Matt's accounts showed how all-encompassing spirituality was and how it affected the various aspects of their lives:

It means to me inner quietness, peace, clarity, direction, yes, fulfillment, a good life, consolation. (Luke, 1.19)

Spirituality is important in my life in questions about purpose, about my place, about finding contentment. (Matt, 1.44)

Their spirituality clearly entails an existential component. It helps them answer the deeper questions of who they are and why they do what they do.

Finally, Rolf underlined the aspect of spirituality as an organizing principle for life:

Spirituality is very important for me. I believe my life would look completely different without it. (Rolf, 1.83)

He went on to say that even though this might sound a bit extreme, he was not even sure if he would still be alive if he had not found faith and found a personal approach to spirituality. He said that his spirituality had led him into more freedom. Interestingly, Rolf kept describing how important this was for almost 50 lines of the

interview transcript, with many examples of how spirituality had played a major role in his life. What stood out to me is the phrase “completely different”, which is a clear indication that spirituality is not an added layer in Rolf’s life, but it is *the* core.

It seemed that for all of the participants, their spirituality (including some sort of relationship to the divine, some guiding principles and some spiritual practices) was the central organizing principle for their lives. Everything was (at least partly) seen through a spiritual lens. Life events were interpreted through spiritual language. Spirituality was also experienced through various channels other than spiritual rituals or prayer, such as relationships (Beatrice), conversations (Matt), music (Beatrice, Luke), service (Dean) or sports (Rolf). Spirituality was understood as multi-dimensional, as a foundation that permeates all of life. Spirituality is much more a part of reality for these six participants than just an add-on or a practice that is followed.

4.2.2 Spirituality as a Connection to the Unseen / to a Higher Power

Interestingly, all participants underlined the importance of spirituality in their lives but had difficulties to put into words what exactly they meant by the concept of spirituality. The findings here are therefore in line with what had been stated in the literature review about the difficulty of defining spirituality. This came out quite clearly in Luke’s account when asked about how he would define spirituality, keeping in mind that he later said that spirituality meant to him *inner quietness, peace, clarity, direction, yes, fulfillment, a good life, consolation (1.19)*.

That is a good question (laughs)...a good question that I have never really answered before. It is actually quite clear to me, but I can’t really explain it very clearly right now. (Luke, 1.10)

While most participants struggled to provide a definition of what spirituality exactly meant to them, one common element in all accounts was that spirituality has to do with connection to an unseen higher power. For Dean, it seemed most straight forward: “*Spirituality is about staying connected with God*” (1.28). Beatrice was a bit less concrete and spoke more generally of “*awareness of a higher power*” (1.22) but then specified that it is also about “*a connection to a higher power or...forces that are invisible*” (1.24). She added that it is also about seeking out this connection. So for Dean and Beatrice, spirituality was something that needed to be pursued proactively.

Matt and Luke focused on an unseen, greater reality that can only be accessed through spirituality.

That you don't just cling to what is or what you see, but also believe that there is more than what you just see or experience (Matt, 1.33).

Spirituality has much to do with perceiving, more than the seen, and with a different reality. (Luke, 1.12)

For Elena and Rolf, there was also an added sense of control or agency that originated in that unseen realm.

I would describe spirituality as the knowledge that there is something higher that has more control than I do and that sees more. (Elena, 1.45)

I believe that while we have this visible world, there is this large invisible world where the strings are pulled. (Rolf, 1.102)

In the different interviews, a common theme was that through connecting with a higher power or a higher reality, wisdom and guidance could be accessed or received.

All participants saw spirituality as an active seeking out of a higher or unseen reality. Next to spirituality as a guiding principle for life (as described in the previous subsection), spirituality was here described as a metaphysical resource. In light of the research question about the impact of spirituality on teaching practice, this is a first key finding. As will be shown under meta-theme two of this chapter (section 4.3), such a feeling or awareness of constantly being guided by a higher power influences how the participants teach and how they perceive their class.

4.2.3 Spirituality is Different From Religiosity

Another common thread in the conversation about spirituality that could be found in all of the participants' accounts was that they made a clear distinction between spirituality and religiousness when asked to define the terms, yet seemed to also include religious elements into their spiritual practices. As shown in the literature review, a distinction of the two concepts is not always easy to make and some researchers claim that it is unproductive to distinguish. Nevertheless, for the participants, some clear differences could be identified. Except for Matt, all of them did not self-describe as religious even though they all belonged to a Christian religious community. All except for Matt saw religiosity as something rather negative.

Religiosity to me is something that has negative connotations. (Beatrice, 1.57)

For Elena, the defining element of spirituality was that it needed to be experienced daily, with intention, and not just as a ritual or obligation. In a sense, she contrasted a deadness of religiosity with an aliveness of spirituality.

Religiosity is more something that one does because one does it. It has to do with rituals and traditions. Spirituality must be experienced in everyday life, otherwise it makes no sense. (Elena, 1.54)

Similarly, Dean contrasted the fixed and impersonal state of religiosity with the personal nature of spirituality.

Religiosity is more theoretical, and rituals...Spirituality is living it out personally. (Dean, 1.58)

In addition, Luke highlighted the dynamism and fluidity of spirituality versus the static nature of religiosity.

Religiosity has much to do with prescribed forms and dogma...spirituality grows, changes - should change, because it is relational...it is not static. (Luke, 1.35)

Luke described how even though he felt that he also had some of the static religiosity in his life, that was not how he would define himself. He stressed the relational aspect of spirituality, which is similar to what Rolf's definition highlighted.

Religiosity...is like following a cooking recipe.... Spirituality is more on a relational level. (Rolf, 1.41)

The participants' accounts created a picture of spirituality as something that is dynamic and relational and that must be experienced in everyday life. The only definition that was somewhat in contrast to these was Matt's. He was the only one who identified as both spiritual and religious. The main reason for this was that he had experienced how complicated it was to explain to people what was meant by "spiritual".

I used to see religiosity as something negative. But I have come to see that people understand more quickly when I say 'I am religious'. (Matt, 1.62)

I found it interesting in these accounts about 'spirituality vs. religiosity' that for the participants, the usual church rituals held a very low importance, while they underlined how much the spiritual was something that needed to be nurtured and lived out. It was like a relationship that needed to be tended to, so that it could grow and flourish.

Some of the teachers (Dean, Rolf, Elena) used the word *faith* at times interchangeably with the word spirituality. This was probably due to their denominational affiliation with evangelical Christianity where the term faith is used in a very encompassing way.

The data from this first section seem to suggest that for all six participants, spirituality is more than an add-on to their lives. Their spirituality is a core element, providing structure and direction to their lives. The data thus, on the one hand, support the results from both the quantitative spirituality self-assessments as well as the self-description as highly spiritual. On the other hand, the interviews also give insight into what this spirituality looks like. The key finding of this section is that spirituality is one of the most important aspects of the participants' lives. This then makes it worthwhile to explore how this key life dimension affects their teacher identity, their teaching practice and relationships at school and where the challenges lie in a secular school environment.

4.3 Meta-Theme Two: SPIRITUALITY'S IMPACT ON TEACHER IDENTITY

Section one of this chapter has shown how central spirituality is for the participants and what common elements their spirituality has in a very general way. This section focuses on the impact this spirituality has on teacher identity. Again, the main themes that emerged from the data were present in all or most of the interview transcripts. Table 4.2 shows the most prevalent subordinate themes pertaining to spirituality's impact on teacher identity. All themes were present in at least five out of six accounts.

<i>Subordinate Theme</i>	<i>Elena</i>	<i>Beatrice</i>	<i>Matt</i>	<i>Dean</i>	<i>Luke</i>	<i>Rolf</i>	<i>Total</i>
Spirituality Shapes Identity	1	1	1	2	2	1	8
Career choice	1	2	2	n	1	1	7
Teacher identity	1	1	1	1	1	n	5
Pedagogical views	1	1	1	1	1	n	5
Resource against stress	2	3	1	4	1	1	12

Table 4.2 – Subordinate Themes for Meta-Theme Two

4.3.1 Spirituality Shapes General Identity

As seen in section one, spirituality is central in the lives of the six participants; it has to do with connection and relationship, and it is a dynamic daily experience. What emerged from the data about the main reason why spirituality has such a high importance was that for these participants, it had to do with meaning and purpose,

with the deepest existential questions of life. This has to do both with identity and with legacy.

Luke stated that while many things would be meaningful in his life, the ultimate meaning would come out of his relationship with God.

Meaning is provided by God, in a nutshell. (Luke, 1.51)

Rolf explained that “*my faith provides meaning*” (1.114), because he would never feel totally alone, he would know that no matter what the problem, there would always be a solution and that nothing would be so terrible as to totally pull the carpet out from under his feet. It was this access he felt he had to God at any time that made his spirituality so meaningful.

Elena described how she would complete everyday tasks with a spiritual perspective, where suddenly everything could become meaningful. She also believed that her actions could go beyond herself and somehow contribute to the greater good when done with this spiritual perspective.

When I do it with a spiritual perspective, it is more valuable, even if it is only baking a cake, let's say, or baking bread. An extended purpose that continues on. (Elena 2.468)

In a similar vein, Dean felt that his calling, which originated in his faith, was to serve others and to leave a lasting mark in this world.

The purpose lays in the lasting mark I leave behind, it's about serving others. (Dean, 1.113)

For Beatrice and Matt, the meaning came through the affirmation of their identity as beloved children of God.

We are children of God...that does provide meaning for my life. (Beatrice, 1.122)

The knowledge that there is a God who has created me and likes me the way I am. (Matt, 1.68)

Both Matt and Beatrice described how they could fall back on this deep-seated knowledge especially in times of self-doubt or pressure. When they were being criticized or felt like they were going out on a limb, they felt they knew who they were and believed that someone was watching over them.

It becomes clear from this sub-section that spirituality shapes the general identity of these six participants: who they are and what their purpose is. This shaping has a concrete influence on the participants' teacher identity: why they have become teachers, who they are as teachers, how they perceive the students and how they handle difficulties and stress.

4.3.2 Influence of Spirituality on Career Choice

For all participants except Dean, spirituality was a direct or indirect motivator for becoming a teacher. For Elena and Beatrice, this mostly had to do with spiritual values that they saw as a valuable asset for the teaching profession. Elena talked about relationships, supporting students, empathy and love which she directly linked to her spirituality. For her, teaching then was more of a natural fit than a clear and direct calling:

It probably had an influence, not consciously but unconsciously. (Elena, 1.84)

Similarly, Beatrice focused on the value of love that she received through her relationship with God and how this enabled her to pass on love to her students. She recalled the experience of working in a church youth group as a teenager and how this had opened her eyes toward how much she loved the work with teenagers.

I have realized that my spirituality influenced my career choice....The love it provides for me to work with teenagers. (Beatrice, 2.454)

For the three male teachers, there was a more direct link between spirituality and career choice. When reading their accounts, one recognizes the sense of calling or even predestination in their explanations. For Luke, it was the gift of music that he always wanted to share with others. He mentioned many times during the interview that spirituality was one of his main ways of connecting with God. For him, music is something inherently spiritual and practicing music in class is a profound way of sharing his spirituality with his students and opening up a space for them to experience spirituality.

God has given me certain gifts. Because of these, I made a decision for my profession. (Luke, 1.56)

Matt emphasized the sense of purpose that teaching provided him. He stressed the fact that there was also a sense of obligation to contribute to society with one's God-given gifts and talents and felt that this would fit best with teaching. It was interesting for me to hear that he had considered other professions but felt that they would be too

self-centered and self-serving in the end. Teaching for him was the task God had given him to be an agent of change.

God has led me into a field where I have a purposeful task and where I can make a difference. (Matt, 1.71)

The strongest sense of predestination came from Rolf's account. He told the story of having gone through great difficulties as a young adult and how God opened the doors for him to become a teacher, which had a life-saving quality.

I believe that there was someone who has pulled the strings for me in the background. (Rolf, 1.143)

In these accounts, it becomes clear that teaching is more than just a career choice or a means to earn money for these teachers. They are teachers because they find their spiritual values (Elena, Beatrice) or their God-given gifts (Luke) reflected in teaching, because they feel called to give back to society (Matt), or because they understand their career choice as the outcome of God opening and closing doors (Rolf). It is interesting that while Dean stated that his spirituality had no influence on his career choice, he later talked about the sense of calling to serve as his main motivation to be a teacher. Thus, all accounts reflect how teaching as a career is directly connected to spirituality for these teachers. It is a profession that is in harmony with their spiritual worldview. There is a strong sense of being in the right place as a teacher. This finding is important when reflecting on the inherent dilemmas and tensions the participants are facing at school because of their spirituality, which are described in detail in section 4.5 of this chapter.

4.3.3 Influence of Spirituality on Teacher Identity

For the participants, their spirituality has influenced their choice to become a teacher. Closely connected to this sense of calling to become a teacher is the influence of spirituality on how they see themselves as teachers.

Just like Matt stated when talking about career choice, Elena explained how this nuance of being in the right place was central to how she perceived herself as a teacher. In her account, there was this positive notion of knowing why she did what she did because she knew who had placed her there:

First of all, there is this self-conception: I am in the right place, God has placed me here. (Elena, 1.110)

Dean described how his spirituality provided him with a sense of confidence because his self-worth came from a spiritual source. Knowing that he was a child of God helped him navigate through the ups and downs of teaching teenagers and helped him to integrate the mistakes he made as a teacher.

I have good self-confidence. I do ascribe that to my spirituality. I don't define myself through my job. (Luke, 1.85)

For Beatrice and for Matt, it was less clear how their spirituality influenced their teacher identity, but both of them did see a clear connection between the two. Beatrice felt that since her teacher identity was part of her general identity, there would be a clear overlap between her spiritual identity and her teacher identity.

I am sure it influences my teacher identity, because it influences my identity, be it consciously or unconsciously. (Beatrice, 1.138)

Matt mentioned the concept of “shifting focus”, of being reminded at certain points in class that there was this higher reality or higher power. These moments would then put into perspective who he was as a teacher and why he was doing what he was doing.

It is hard to say, but I believe in certain situations, my spirituality shapes who I am as a teacher...when I try to shift focus. (Matt, 1.99)

Dean felt that the God-given experiences with the mental health struggles of his own daughter (see section 4.3.4) had shaped who he was as a teacher. It was therefore more of an indirect influence of spirituality on teacher identity in his case. He did not make any direct links except that he felt called to serve his students as a teacher.

It has helped me to develop a greater sensitivity as a teacher. (Dean, 2.166)

Rolf’s account did not contain any reflections on how his spirituality would shape his identity as a teacher. His focus was more on how to implement spirituality in the classroom, which will be analyzed in section 4.4 of this chapter.

4.3.4 Influence of Spirituality on Pedagogical Views

One common theme that most participants’ accounts contained was that their spirituality or their spiritual worldview influenced how they saw and encountered the children they worked with. While Matt and Dean contended that this was not unique to Christian teachers and could be seen as good pedagogy in general, it was nevertheless interesting to see how they would clearly make the connection between spirituality and pedagogy. This was nuanced in each account. For Elena, it was most

important to teach each child that he or she was valuable in God's eyes. For her, it was very much task oriented.

It is a Godly thought, that the youth discover: This is who I am and this is what is part of me. (Elena, 1.103)

Matt stressed the need to appreciate each child, no matter what behavior is shown, and that there should be no favoritism amongst teachers. For him, it had more to do with an inner attitude towards the children.

Appreciation for each child, and for all the same. I feel that God has that, too, and yes, I find it important that each child is loved and supported. (Matt, 1.93)

For Beatrice and Luke, there was a direct link between spirituality and affect. Their spirituality would influence how they felt about the students. Beatrice underlined that it helped her to see the children in a different light when teaching, especially in difficult situations:

It helps me when I'm upset, to see the children as children of God. (Beatrice, 1.119)

For Luke, it was a sense of love for the students that he draws from a spiritual source.

Spirituality influences my views in an extreme way.... I just love people. (Luke, 1.66)

The most detailed account about how spirituality influenced his pedagogical views came from Dean. He shared a story of how his own teenage daughter had struggled with mental health issues. Trying to understand what was going on for his daughter and trying to find ways to help her had then softened his heart towards students that

were struggling in his class and even towards their parents. He said that this had transformed him from being a very strict teacher who would often find fault with the parents' way of raising a child to a more empathetic and understanding teacher. Interestingly, there was a thankfulness towards God expressed in his account, that through taking care of his daughter, he had received a new perspective.

I have become much more understanding because God has given me such a daughter. (Dean, 2.164)

It was somewhat surprising to me that while Rolf saw God so clearly lead him to become a teacher, he did not talk at all about how his spiritual views influenced his pedagogical views.

4.3.5 Spirituality as a Resource Against Stress

The clearest evidence of spirituality's influence on teacher identity and teaching practice from the participants' accounts was that it served as a resource against stress. It was the subordinate theme under meta-theme two that was most clearly present with a total of twelve separate incidents recounted in the accounts. This is important to note because all participants shared that they experienced their profession as stressful at times, and that the challenges had increased over the last years. Not only did they talk about the challenging social behavior of students, but also about difficult interactions with parents and even among the staff (see section 4.6). Again, spirituality seemed to function less as a single tool or strategy that could be applied and more as an integrated and comprehensive part of life.

Beatrice described that when the demands of the classroom seemed to overwhelm her, spirituality provided "*a secure foundation for my life*" (1.31). She explained later in

the interview what that looks like for her when she encountered stressful events at school:

When I am stressed, I know where I can go with my distressing thoughts, that I'm not somehow lost, but protected....that helps me very much. I then search for God, for his closeness. (Beatrice, 2.179)

Elena had a similar sense of being sustained by God, especially in times of stress in the classroom:

I know God is behind me and I can come to Him when I need help or wisdom or anything. (Elena, 1.112)

She told a few stories of when she had to have a difficult conversation or when she was having an especially taxing day, and how she knew “*I can count on God, when I need him*” (1.133). It was this sense that she never had to face any challenges on her own, but that there was God’s Spirit who would help her and guide her.

The theme of stress also came up in Matt’s account. What seemed most important to him in times of challenge at work was the sense that God had placed him at his school with his class for a reason.

When I am stressed, it helps to know ‘yes, I am in the right place’. (Matt, 1.107)

This sense of calling to be a teacher that was clearly intertwined with his spiritual worldview gave Matt the perseverance to face struggles head-on and to be confident that the struggles were only temporary.

For Dean, the theme of resource against stress was very prominent. He shared very openly about how he struggled at times with difficult classes and about his wish to be there for troubled children and to serve them. He stated that what helped him to persevere in times of struggle was that

*God never gives you more than you can handle....I trust that this is true.
(Dean, 2.250)*

It was interesting to me how he felt that God would always allow for some struggle in his life, but never too much. He said that when things were difficult at home (with his mentally- ill daughter), things would usually be well at school and vice versa. It surprised me to what extent he was confident that God was somehow orchestrating his life. He called his faith “*an anchor when things don’t go well*” (2.190). He would “*deposit what upsets me with God*” (2.46) and would pray

*“God, give me the strength to not let go of these kids and to not give up.”
(Dean, 2.623)*

Luke explained how for him, spirituality would bring “*a sense of calm*” (1.102) in times of stress, but that beyond that, it would also help do discern what was important in life and what was not and how this would somehow put the stress into perspective, and that it would add a foundational joy to his life even when things were not always easy:

Joy is something that strongly appears here. Even when things don’t look so rosy at times in class, my faith provides a basic joy, which is extremely helpful to not get burned out. (Luke, 1.107)

In Rolf's account, spirituality has two main functions in times of stress. One is to be able to talk to and listen to God. He said that he wished he could more often just lock himself up in his classroom and sit in there in silence and converse with God. In this dialogue, he would find relief, he could offload and deposit what was on his mind and heart. These times would not only help him to process challenges but would also be a way to regain energy when feeling depleted.

It is at times an extreme relief. Also, a place to offload and to recharge. (Rolf, 2.231)

Section 4.2 of this chapter has shown how spirituality holds a central place in the participants' lives. Section 4.3 has provided insight into how this spirituality influences why the participants became teachers, how they see themselves as teachers, how they see their students and how they use spirituality as a personal resource. It is evident from the various accounts that spirituality has a profound influence on their teacher identity exactly because it holds a central place in their lives. Section 4.4 will show how the teachers attempt to incorporate their spirituality in the classroom.

4.4 Meta-Theme Three: INDIRECT SPIRITUALITY IN THE CLASSROOM

This section investigates how the participants practically integrate spirituality into classroom practice. Surprisingly, all six participants had similar ways of how they attempted to live out their spirituality in class and where they had their struggles or reservations (which will be discussed in greater detail in section 4.5 of this chapter). The main finding of this section is that all teachers incorporated their spirituality in indirect ways. Rather than openly talking about it or performing spiritual exercises or rituals with students, they tried to convey spirituality through indirect means such as

spiritual values or silent prayer. Table 4.3 shows that all the common themes were prevalent in nearly all the interviews.

<i>Subordinate Theme</i>	<i>Elena</i>	<i>Beatrice</i>	<i>Matt</i>	<i>Dean</i>	<i>Luke</i>	<i>Rolf</i>	<i>Total</i>
Key spiritual experiences	1	1	1	1	1	1	6
Spirituality works automatically	1	1	1	3	1	1	8
Values	2	3	2	1	1	2	11
Holidays	2	1	1	1	1	n	6
Prayer	4	2	2	5	2	1	16
Being led	3	1	1	2	1	2	10

Table 4.3 – Subordinate Themes for Meta-Theme 3

4.4.1 Key Spiritual Experience in the Classroom

When asked about how they incorporated their personal spirituality in the classroom, all six participants shared a story of an especially spiritual moment that they had experienced with their class or with a student. These experiences seemed to have become a catalyst for the teachers to pursue spirituality in their teaching practice.

The most powerful re-telling of such a special spiritual moment came from Beatrice. She said that it was one of the highlights of her teaching career, and she was close to tears and still very moved when recounting it. It was a lesson she had planned with music and with an activity where the students were to write encouragements to each other. After they had written the encouragements and were reading them, some of

them were so touched that they started to cry, which deeply impacted the entire class on an emotional level. Beatrice interpreted this through a spiritual lens:

The room was full of the spirit, I almost started to cry, it was crazy. (Beatrice, 1.162)

Rolf had a similar experience that was very emotional when he had spent the last lesson with a class before graduation and how the conversation they were having was about how they had overcome obstacles during their school time. Then they watched an inspirational video together and talked about existential questions.

And there were some who could not hold back their tears. (Rolf, 1.191)

Similarly to Beatrice, for Rolf it was clear that there was a spiritual component to this conversation, and that the emotionality came through the presence of a higher power.

Elena also attributed a key experience she had with a student to the intervention of a higher power. This experience showed her that spirituality was useful and directly applicable to difficult situations in the classroom.

I once journeyed with this youth. She had a very difficult time and I carried her very much in prayer. And it was an awesome experience to see how...we experienced a breakthrough. (Elena, 2.256)

Luke recounted the episode of when a student of his went through a personal crisis. In helping her, he realized that his spirituality enabled him to set different priorities, to value the relationship higher than the academic goals.

To give spirituality room and not make class or school the first priority...I could totally encourage her. (Luke, 1.142)

Matt did not have such a clear key spiritual experience, but he mentioned that there were these special spiritual experiences in the classroom. When asked to specify, he recounted episodes where he could have deep conversations with his class about spirituality. He was most encouraged when the students would bring the topic into class and would initiate the conversations about spirituality themselves. For Matt, this was a reason to continue incorporating spirituality in his teaching as he perceived it as a need that was also indirectly voiced by the students.

Everything came from the students. I found that super cool, all the points they brought in. (Matt, 2.283)

Similarly to Matt, for Dean there was not one experience that stood out, but he spoke of these special lessons that were a God-given gift, when everything just seemed to go better than expected or when there would be an unexpected positive turn.

Sometimes there are these pearls of lessons that I have not even planned like that. (Dean, 2.583)

In all the accounts, what is interesting is that it was the interpretation of the events that made them spiritual for the participants. Their view of the world as a spiritual place provided the lens to perceive spirituality in events that other teachers would have likely explained in just psychological terms. It is this remarkable concept that spirituality is a resource when things do not go so well, and when things do go well, it is a gift or a blessing from a higher power.

4.4.2 Spirituality Works Automatically

Next to the stories of key spiritual experiences in the classroom, an interesting theme that could be identified in each account was the notion that spirituality would somehow work automatically if the teacher was a spiritual person. While each teacher described this in different terms, all their conclusions were very similar: While it can be good to talk about spirituality with students, this may not always be necessary. It was this concept of the unseen higher power that affects the children in a positive way.

First of all, it has to do with your aura. In a sense of: God is in the midst. He is in me. (Elena, 2.482)

I believe that there is something godly in me...and what I do or say, one could possibly call that automatic spiritual aura. (Luke, 2.402)

It is just through my being - I believe - that spirituality comes across. (Beatrice, 2.484)

Again and again students come to me and ask: Do you believe in God? It's about what I exude. (Matt, 2.301)

And I hope that God shapes me in a way or gives me a spirit that has a positive influence on the children. (Dean, 1.271)

Rolf used the biblical image of light and salt that has a similar connotation. He stated that students should be able to perceive through the teacher's life the Good News of God's love for them.

We should just be light; we should be salt. (Rolf, 1.247)

I found this notion of a positive aura, spirit or energy that automatically exudes from the teacher fascinating. It contributes to a very positive spiritual worldview in which the teachers feel carried when facing challenges, feel gifted when things go well and feel like they have an automatic positive influence on their students.

4.4.3 Teaching Spirituality Indirectly Through Values

All participants felt that there were obvious tensions about incorporating spirituality in the classroom (see section 4.5). There was a general hesitation of speaking about spirituality too much, while there was also a desire to share spirituality with the students. All participants felt that one appropriate way to teach about spirituality in the classroom was through values. While these values are not per se spiritual, the participants again connected them to their personal spirituality and saw them as spiritual values. For example, for Elena, teaching about forgiveness would also mean imparting to her students an important aspect of what she deemed beneficial in her spirituality. Being a special education teacher, she often worked one-on-one with students and used these opportunities to talk about such spiritual values. For Elena, Beatrice and Matt, *teaching* the values was more on the forefront.

There are all these spiritual values that I've tried to teach...honesty, empathy, forgiveness, reconciliation. (Elena, 1.115)

It is often also about teaching good values....The value of loving one another. (Beatrice, 1.124)

I have my spiritual values, and it's ok to teach them in my view. (Matt, 1.207)

Luke and Rolf highlighted the importance of living out and showing the spiritual values.

My goal is to show them appreciation. (Luke, 1.223)

I try to portray a great deal of appreciation and thankfulness. (Rolf, 2.444)

Dean talked about the value of respect in regard to spirituality but from a different angle than the other participants. He felt that it was of utmost importance to respect each other's spiritual and religious views and practices. In this sense, he stressed the importance of interreligious dialogue more than the transmission of his personal spiritual values to his students.

This important word: respect. I respect it and I demand respect. (Dean, 2.392)

4.4.4 Holidays as an Anchor for Spiritual Topics

I noticed in most of the participants' accounts that they were actively looking for opportunities where they felt it was appropriate to talk about spirituality in the classroom. This shows that they considered it inappropriate to just bring up the topic of spirituality at any given moment. They needed a concrete reason for it to become appropriate. The common theme in four of the six transcripts was that Christian holidays were used as an anchor or a platform for talking about spirituality in class.

Elena and Dean would always read inspiring spiritual texts (for example Bible stories) before major Christian holidays and would then discuss their meaning with the class.

I always found it great when there was a Christian holiday. I always made spirituality a topic then. (Elena, 1.241)

And I wrote down where it fits best: Christmas, Palm Sunday, Good Friday, Easter... (Dean, 1.273)

Both Beatrice and Luke would listen to music with spiritual or religious themes during the holiday season. For both of them, music is something that directly touches the spirit and is in itself a spiritual tool.

I do this consciously always before Christmas....The ambiance is always so nice. It does the students good, even if they cannot explain why. (Beatrice, 1.201)

There is a lot of music with spiritual content: the Christmas Oratorium for Christmas, the Passion for Easter...(Luke, 2.172)

As the participants described how they would use holidays as occasions for talking about spirituality, I noticed an obvious discrepancy between the importance of spirituality in the teachers' lives and the desire to share this spirituality with their class, on the one hand, and the hesitancy of making this too much of a topic in their classroom, on the other hand. Section 4.5 of this chapter will shed more light on this tension.

4.4.5 Importance of Prayer

Maybe the most consistent way in which the participants would incorporate their spirituality into everyday pedagogical practice was through silent and private prayer. This theme came up 16 times in total in the interviews. Prayer seems to be a very real and practical way of offering support to students, other teachers or the school. Prayer is the way par excellence for these teachers to bring the spiritual and unseen together with the physical realm. They see it as a safe way to live out spirituality at the

workplace. The teachers made a clear distinction between praying *with* students which they found mostly inappropriate (but would love to be able to do) and praying *for* students (generally without their knowledge) which they would practice very regularly.

Elena recounted four stories where she had felt that prayer was especially significant. The language she used was very interesting to me. It had an almost physical sense of carrying someone through difficult times. However, she would do this in private and would not let the students know about it, despite the desire at times to put a hand on a student's shoulder and pray out loud for them when they were struggling.

I didn't say it directly, but I carried her very much in prayer. (Elena, 1.257)

Dean spoke about the importance of prayer five times during the interviews. Prayer for him seemed to be a way of life, a central aspect of his daily activities that takes up a considerable amount of time. He explained that instead of just sitting around during break times, he would use the time to pray for whoever was passing him in the hallway.

And often during break times when I have everything ready, I stand outside....and I pray a lot for these kids and for the school. (Dean, 1.55)

Beatrice told a story of immanent crisis (a suicide attempt) where she felt that she could do nothing but pray for the situation and the student. This episode highlights the spiritual worldview that ascribes much power to a God who can intervene in the physical world.

And then I prayed for the student almost the entire weekend. (Beatrice, 1.230)

Matt, who came across as a quite private person during the interviews, stated that for him, the most relaxed way to incorporate spirituality in his professional life was through personal prayer at home.

I definitely pray for students at home, by myself. (Matt, 1.186)

In contrast, Luke said that for him, prayer was a constant flow also in class. He would silently bless students or pray for them whenever a situation arose or whenever a student would stand out to him for any reason. It almost seemed like an additional tool of classroom management for him, a way of invoking the help of a higher power to handle various situations that would come up during class.

I keep blessing them, especially during class, when I'm face to face with them. (Luke, 2.238)

The one who talked least about prayer was Rolf. He mentioned that he wished he would pray more for students, but he felt that he did not have enough time for it during the often hectic school days and that, being a sports teacher, he did not have the privacy of his own classroom to do so. His view of prayer was less integrated than the other teachers' and more of a concrete separate act that he would communicate to a student.

'Look, I have 5 minutes, and I will go pray for you.' And they appreciate that very much. (Rolf, 2.303)

The theme of prayer was one of the most prominent in the interviews. It was being incorporated in the classroom indirectly through silent and private prayer. It revealed

again this tension of longing for a more open expression but the fear that this would be inappropriate.

4.4.6 Being Led by a Higher Power

Another quite prominent theme that I could identify in the data was the concept the participants held about being led at school by a higher power. This theme most clearly reveals the participants' worldview of a presence and benevolent interference of a higher power in their everyday lives. Most participants believed that inspiration, higher wisdom, direction or specific impressions would be given by the Holy Spirit. They all relied on this input for very practical everyday decision-making, especially when they struggled to see a way forward.

When I reach my limits, I am dependent on receiving wisdom. Higher wisdom than what I already know. (Elena, 1.79)

Then I can feel how God shows me things and I can react to them. (Beatrice, 2.473)

In certain situations, I try to switch focus and reflect or ask God: What do you want in this situation? What do you want for this child? What should I do? (Matt, 1.99)

And maybe I am given a thought by the Holy Spirit. (Dean, 1.40)

At times I have completely changed the lesson because I had the impression that that was what I was supposed to do in that moment. (Luke, 2.252)

In a sense, this “being led” complements the theme of prayer. It is like a two-way conversation: the teacher praying and God / the Holy Spirit answering through

impressions. This again plays into the theme of resilience. The teachers all felt like they had an unseen helper that guided them in their teaching practice. As Rolf put it, they felt like they were not alone:

I am very grateful for....such direction. And to realize that I am never really alone. (Rolf, 1.108)

When comparing the findings in meta-theme one (spirituality is very important for the participants) and meta-theme two (spirituality influences and shapes their teacher identity) with the findings of meta-theme three (spirituality is only implemented indirectly in the classroom), we start to sense a tension between values these teachers hold and the practical applicability of these in a secular school setting. It is a tension between the spiritual part of their teacher identity and the restrictions within the school system that they sense. The next meta-theme will explore these tensions in more detail.

4.5 Meta-Theme Four: TENSIONS BETWEEN SPIRITUALITY AND TEACHING

This next section of the findings chapter investigates the highly significant themes about tensions between spirituality and teaching practice. Three subordinate themes could be identified: a) The teachers hold back deliberately. They would like to incorporate their spirituality more directly in the classroom but feel that this could lead to problems. b) Spirituality is not something that the teachers feel they can openly discuss with their fellow staff. c) This leads to inner tensions for some of the teachers.

<i>Subordinate Theme</i>	<i>Elena</i>	<i>Beatrice</i>	<i>Matt</i>	<i>Dean</i>	<i>Luke</i>	<i>Rolf</i>	<i>Total</i>
Deliberate restraint	2	3	3	2	4	7	21
Not a topic amongst staff	2	1	1	1	2	1	8
Inner tensions	3	2	n/a	1	1	1	8

Table 4.4 – Subordinate Themes for Meta-Theme Four

4.5.1 Deliberate Restraint

The most prevalent of all themes in the interviews was the one that I call “deliberate restraint”. This theme came up several times in each interview, totaling 21 separate mentions. For all participants, there was a discrepancy between living out their spirituality in their private lives and living it out in a professional setting. They all recounted examples of when they had to repress an urge to e.g. pray out loud for a student or share aspects of their spiritual worldview or faith. In all instances, they felt that it would have been beneficial for the student, but they were hesitant to act accordingly. However, the reasoning for not acting on the impulse to implement spirituality at the given moment varied among the participants.

For Elena, there was a felt fear of indoctrinating students. She felt that sharing her faith would possibly come across as an imposition, because as a teacher, she was in a position of power:

I realized: I can't do this. Otherwise I would abuse my position of power and indoctrinate them, because they are dependent on me. (Elena, 1.211)

She continued that with a friend or in a different setting, she would have acted entirely differently and would have been able to share from her heart. It is this aspect of having something on one's heart but not being able to communicate it to the students one cares about that also rang true for Matt and Dean. They had both stated that they spent considerable time praying for students, but this was something they would not do in class (Matt) or would not even communicate to the students (Dean).

I wouldn't pray for students directly in class. (Matt, 1.194)

I would never say 'I pray in the morning' or 'I am praying for you'. (Dean, 2.286)

Similarly, Beatrice said that she would only incorporate spirituality in a way that it would remain under the students' radar, that nobody would be able to really pinpoint it as something explicitly spiritual.

Concrete acts, I only do them subliminally. (Beatrice, 1.250)

Luke explained that he had found good ways of incorporating spirituality through music, but he was very clear about sticking to the official curriculum (e.g. when choosing the songs), so that he would not force a student to be exposed to certain content against his/her will.

I am hesitant when there are situations where they have to do something. (Luke, 2.299)

Rolf's hesitation was similar and showed that his motivation for restraining spirituality in his teaching practice was at least partially due to self-protection. He

described that incorporating spirituality could easily make him a target of criticism from parents, colleagues and school leadership.

You make yourself vulnerable. (Rolf, 1.198)

What I find intriguing about these statements is that the deliberate restraint is in clear contrast to a) what is on the teachers' heart, b) what they deem beneficial for the students, and c) how they live their spirituality outside the classroom. There seems to be great insecurity about what is permissible in the classroom, about how much of their true identity they can share with their students.

4.5.2 Spirituality is Not a Topic Amongst Staff

The dilemma pointed out in the previous paragraph is also at least partially due to the fact that all teachers felt that it was difficult to talk about spirituality amongst their colleagues. Rolf's statement that he did not want to make himself vulnerable seems in this regard symptomatic for a teaching body where certain topics are expected to remain private and where there seems to be unwritten rules of what is permissible in the classroom and what is not. The participants all told examples of having been hesitant to share about their spirituality or faith, but also that this was a topic all staff avoided to a certain degree:

We did not talk about it. (Elena, 2.395)

There was nothing...I mean that it ever was a topic. (Beatrice, 2.414)

A topic amongst colleagues?....Very little. (Matt, 1.215)

I am never asked about it. (Dean, 2.364)

Luke stated it most clearly and poignantly, voicing what came across in all the interviews:

Spirituality in class is somewhat of a taboo topic. (Luke, 2.331)

The only one who said that he had experienced discussions about spirituality among colleagues was Rolf. Since these discussions were rather negative in his view, he would not feel comfortable sharing his point of view for fear that he would be put into a box.

I hold back and stay in the background when there are discussions among the staff. (Rolf, 2.376)

4.5.3 Inner Tensions

Considering the fact that all the participants' accounts reflected their experience of spirituality being a sensitive and delicate topic at their school – a topic that was generally suppressed – it is not surprising that this would lead to inner tensions for teachers who self-identify as highly spiritual. Interestingly, the fact that the six participants teach in different schools of different size did not seem to influence their perception of these tensions much. A reason for this may be that the management of Swiss public schools as well as the oversight of teacher education are regionally centralized, leading to quite uniform school policies.

We have encountered these inner tensions in various sections above in more implicit ways. However, most participants also talked about such tensions in more explicit terms, showing that this was something they were quite aware of. The tensions were

manifest in the accounts in different ways. The quotes below reflect a variety of reasons: fear of indoctrination (Elena), fear of parents' reactions (Beatrice, Rolf), fear of colleagues' reactions (Dean), or the tension between "what is" and what one would hope for (Luke). The only one who said that he did not feel tensions was Matt.

Sometimes I thought: Now I should pray with them...and then I felt this tension. (Elena 1.207)

Of course I am convinced that it is good for students, but I don't want them to go home and...(Beatrice, 2.279)

It would only happen once that I pray for students and then get attacked. (Dean, 1.324)

There is a longing to be able to formulate it and pass it on and make it practical. (Luke, 1.256)

You make sure that you are not too clear about it...otherwise one goes home and tells it to Mom and Dad and then you have a problem....of course I wish I would be able to do more. (Rolf, 1.210)

To me, this theme seems significant because it shows that a constant self-censorship can become a stressor and may counteract the benefits of spirituality as a resilience factor for teachers. Also, the participants are all convinced that incorporating spirituality in the classroom would be beneficial for everyone involved, yet they hold back. They cannot fully be who they are in the classroom and cannot fully engage with students in a way they deem beneficial. In my view, there are clear social justice implications in this finding that will be discussed in the next chapter.

4.6 Additional Theme: INTERVIEW INFLUENCES AWARENESS

The final theme that could be identified in the data stems from the second round of interviews. It describes how the first round of interviews has helped the teachers reflect on spirituality in education. Table 4.5 shows that this theme was present in four out for six second-round interviews.

<i>Subordinate Theme</i>	<i>Elena</i>	<i>Beatrice</i>	<i>Matt</i>	<i>Dean</i>	<i>Luke</i>	<i>Rolf</i>	<i>Total</i>
Interview influences awareness	1	1	1	n	1	n	4

Table 4.5 – Interview Influences Awareness

The main findings here is that the first round of interviews influenced the participants’ awareness of and was helpful for their personal reflection on the topic of spirituality in education.

It was on my mind the first few days after the interview. (Beatrice, 2.538)

What stood out is that such personal reflection was something they all had done relatively little before. It was a privilege for me to hear that the interviews led the teachers to realize that they liked the effect their personal spirituality had on their teaching practice. The interview also helped highlight spirituality as an important part of who they are as a teacher. Despite the tensions inherent in the topic, the participants stated that spirituality in education was important (Elena), good (Matt), and a win for all (Luke).

The interview has helped me to reflect on and become aware of what is important to me. (Elena, 2.547)

It helped me to reflect and I was positively surprised to realize: I do it well and it is present and that is good. (Matt, 2.328)

The interview helped me to perceive the breadth of possibilities and also to see it as a win for the students and for myself. (Luke, 2.486)

These statements highlight the benefits of the repeat-interview design of this study. The researcher can harness the participants' reflections and processes initiated by the first interview. In that sense, the interviewing process itself can be seen as a relevant finding of this study. Also, the stimulating effect of the in-depth IPA interviews and the relationship between researcher and participant that is created through them is noteworthy.

4.7 Chapter Summary

The key insights from this findings chapter are:

- 1) For the participants, spirituality is both core to their personal identity and their teacher identity. It influences how they see their profession, their role as teachers and their students.
- 2) Spirituality is an important resilience factor for these teachers. It provides them a place for dealing with difficulties as well as a source of wisdom and strength.
- 3) Spirituality is being incorporated in class through indirect and often hidden ways. The main form is prayer.

- 4) Fear of controversies leads these teachers to restrain themselves in the area of spirituality against their own desire. This leads to inner tensions.
- 5) Reflection on the spiritual aspects of pedagogy can help teachers understand the valuable ways in which spirituality contributes to their pedagogical practice.

In the next chapter, these key insights will be discussed in light of the research literature as well as in light of the researcher's personal experience.

5 Discussion

In this discussion chapter, the main findings that were presented in the previous chapter will be reflected upon in light of the research literature. Also, following the method of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, the main findings will be interpreted from the researcher's perspective. According to the structure of the findings section, the most important findings will be briefly reintroduced and then discussed within the five main sections: 1) centrality of spirituality, 2) impact of spirituality on teacher identity, 3) indirect spirituality in the classroom, 4) tensions between spirituality and teaching and 5) reflecting on spirituality in education. Each section contains a brief summary with the key insight that comes from this study.

5.1 Centrality of Spirituality

The importance of spirituality is interwoven throughout the participants' interviews. As stated in the previous chapter, it is not surprising that spirituality holds such a central place in the participants' lives. It was the hope that the purposive sampling method with self-identification and spirituality assessments would help identify teachers for whom spirituality is of great importance. This finding is good evidence that the participants were rightly chosen to answer the research questions that investigate teacher identity and teaching practice of highly spiritual teachers.

A caveat must be added here before interpreting what this means for the teachers and their profession: All teachers identified as Christian (see methodology section 3.6.2). Despite different denominational backgrounds, their accounts need to be interpreted with the Judeo-Christian theology and tradition in mind. While the participants defined spirituality mostly in non-theological terms, there was nonetheless a clear

connection for all of them to Christian concepts such as the Holy Spirit or God as portrayed in Christian scriptures. While there is not one uniform Christian spirituality, the reader must keep in mind that other spiritualities (based on other religions or secular spiritualities) can be quite different and that teachers practicing such other spiritualities may have rather different experiences in the classroom. For an IPA study, it is fitting that all teachers share a similar religious background. It is however important to keep in mind that in this study, the teacher is always a Christian teacher and spirituality is always referring to Christian spirituality.

In the literature review, it has been demonstrated that defining spirituality is a complex undertaking and that there is great definitional vagueness. This is also true for the participants of this study. They all struggled to provide a clear definition of spirituality. The three elements that they all had in common were: 1) spirituality is different from religion, more personal and relational, more positive and dynamic; 2) spirituality is about connection with a higher being, with something beyond what can be seen; 3) spirituality provides meaning. These themes are consistent with the three most often named elements of spirituality in the research literature: a) connectedness (Hyde, 2008; Waldrop, 2018), b) being embedded in something greater than the self (Benson, Roehlkepartain & Rude, 2003), and c) a search for meaning, purpose and the sacred (Tanyi, 2002). Their differentiation between positive spirituality and negative religiousness also follows the contemporary trend described in the literature (Zinnbauer et al. 1999). It is important to note that the participants use quite stark terms to differentiate. Elena for example speaks of the deadness of religion versus the aliveness of spirituality. None of them except for Matt would want to be identified as religious persons. However, while they make this clear differentiation, the accounts

also show that elements or terms that might be seen as typically religious (God, the Holy Spirit, Jesus, prayer, Children of God) are central in their accounts. While the usefulness of polarization between religiousness and spirituality has been questioned (Zinnbauer & Pargament, 2004), it seems to be of lesser importance for this study to solve the definitional issues. The take-away message here is that for the participants, spirituality is something that is alive and relational, that can be experienced on a personal level and that infiltrates every aspect of being. What stands out from the findings section is that for all of the six participating teachers, spirituality is much more than just an important (compartmentalized) component of their lives. It is *the* organizing and guiding principle that determines their worldview, their value system as well as many practical aspects of life. It seems as if their lives are soaked in spirituality. The spiritual is the reference point, the guiding force, the source of wisdom. It is the lens through which they see and interpret the world. It is what they rely on. For them, there is no dichotomy between the spiritual and the secular. They see themselves as spiritual beings, as connected to a living higher power.

Hartwick (2015a) observed that:

If the belief system influences one's worldview and predisposes one to think or act in particular ways, then teachers' beliefs about God are likely to influence how they view their professional lives, likely impacting how they see and treat students, view knowledge, and what classroom resources they might use. (p. 125)

Interpreting the participants' accounts, I agree with Hartwick that spirituality is a strong influence on a teacher's views; I would even go further and claim that it is the foundation of the participants' worldview (see also Hartwick, 2015b, for a similar argument). And worldview is of paramount importance for teaching, which is often

underestimated amongst teachers (Christian, 2009) as well as by policy makers (Pajak & Blase, 1989). Crenshaw (2013) concludes that “teachers cannot remain religiously neutral, since one’s worldview shapes all aspects of life, particularly one’s pedagogy” (p. 1). Various studies with US teachers show how the impact of teacher spirituality should be taken into consideration because of its centrality in teachers’ lives. Glanzer and Talbert (2005) conducted a large qualitative study amongst Christian US teachers and came to the conclusion that separating a teacher from his or her spirituality may lead to student alienation. White (2009), having interviewed religious US high school teachers, calls religion “the innermost core level that is of direct significance to teachers and their development” (p. 863). Wright (2010) demonstrates in her study that intrinsic religious orientation (along with teacher age) is statistically the most significant factor contributing to teacher self-efficacy. This study contributes to existing literature by providing a European perspective on the central place spirituality takes in these six Swiss high school teachers’ lives.

Key insight: These highly spiritual Swiss secondary teachers interpret everything through a spiritual lens. Spirituality is not an add-on, but the organizing principle of their personal and professional life.

5.2 Spirituality’s Impact on Teacher Identity

It has been argued in the educational literature that teachers strive hard to integrate personal and professional identities (Sikkink, 2010). It can therefore be assumed that spirituality as an organizing principle for life will also majorly affect the teacher’s professional identity. Nelson-Brown (2006) argues that “religion continues to be an overlooked element in educational discourse about identity” (p. 34). The findings in

this study suggest that the participants view the impact of their spirituality on their teacher identity and pedagogy as generally positive, which is in contrast to the tensions they are feeling in the school setting (which will be discussed in section 5.4.).

Positive impacts on teacher identity that are mentioned in the interviews are: better self-confidence, a sense of being in the right place, and more sensitivity as a teacher. This starts with career choice. The literature suggests that many religious teachers feel a sense of calling to be a teacher (Pirner, 2013; White, 2010). This is also true for our participants. It is interesting however that some of them (Elena, Beatrice, Rolf) use a spiritual explanation for their career choice in hindsight. For them, it was therefore less of a conscious decision based on spiritual values and much more of a divine leading they have now come to recognize. This finding underlines the observation that, for these six teachers, the entirety of life is being interpreted through a spiritual lens and is based on a ‘divine blueprint’ (Lapierre, 2017).

This is also true for pedagogical views. What stands out from the interviews is how the teachers view the children: they are worthy of love; they are allowed to be who they are; they are all children of God. Their spirituality provides the teachers with what has been called “unconditional positive regard”, a psychological concept of unconditional acceptance, for example, in the therapeutic relationship (Wilkins, 2000). Unconditional positive regard is seen by some as expressing the religious concept of agape love (Feltham, 1999). For the participants, it would make sense that they would incorporate the concept of unconditional love found in the Christian scriptures and tradition into their spiritual practice. It is in these statements about viewing children with unconditional positive regard or unconditional love that the strength of the

participants' spiritual worldview in an educational context becomes apparent. This is first of all important for the children who are marginalized in class: those who are academically weak, those from ethnic or other minorities, those with difficult family backgrounds, those with disabilities, those who are being bullied. White (2014) argues that "good teaching comes more from identity than from technique" (p. 65) and shows in her research that spiritual perspectives can help teachers to "identify discrimination and promote equitable learning opportunities" (2010, p. 51). The study participants reiterate at various times that for them, relationship comes before content, which is also a priority that White (2010) found in her interviews with Christian high-school teachers. Waldrop (2018) exemplifies this when writing about spirituality in education: "Spirituality, in that realm, is a process of connecting, of pulling together with my students and connecting with them" (p. 75). The positive impact of spirituality on relationships, classroom culture and the creation of a sense of community are topics that have been widely discussed in the literature (see Pirner, 2013, for a review). Spirituality can thus be seen as a component in education that can potentially help make the school experience more personal for students.

How the participants see themselves as teachers and how they see the children is all part of a prominent finding of this study: Spirituality serves as a strong resilience factor for these six teachers. It is important to note here that major changes in the Swiss education system, especially the integration of students with disabilities in regular classes and the increase of children with a migration background, have made teaching more stressful for many public school teachers in Switzerland. This is certainly true in my experience as a high school teacher. After a nine-year break from teaching, returning to the classroom was quite a shock to me because of how much the

social dynamics have changed and how many more children with special needs are now integrated in my regular classes. As shown in the literature review, there is an increasing rate of stress, teacher burnout and of teachers leaving the profession. In this context, teacher well-being and resilience is of utmost importance in the teaching profession. What can be seen in the interviews is that for the participants, some of the foundational questions have been clarified: career choice (being in the right place), and purpose of teaching (loving relationships with lovable children). One can speculate that spirituality has helped the participants in this study stay in the profession, that they may have otherwise changed careers a long time ago without it. While some of them are still relatively young teachers with seven (Beatrice) to ten (Matt, Elena) years of teaching experience, it is especially Dean's account that demonstrates how he has gone intact through many professional crises thanks to the strength provided by his spirituality. Interestingly, spirituality plays a key interpretative role both when things go well and when they are difficult. When things went well, the participants would ascribe this to the benevolence of God; they would see it as a divine gift or blessing. Because of their conception of the presence of a benevolent and loving higher being, when facing difficulties, they would not see them as divine punishment or non-involvement but would rather see God as a source to help cope with the adversity. They would find access to a divine source where they could deposit the difficult things and could recharge their batteries. Thus, their spiritual worldview would be both a resilience factor and a positive coping mechanism. Both spirituality as a resilience factor or protective factor (Klein & Albani, 2007; Koenig, 2012) and as a coping strategy (Pargament, Smith, Koenig & Perez, 1998; Pirner, 2013) are well documented in the literature. What stands out with the study participants is that they would only use positive and no negative religious coping. One

could argue that the purposive sampling favored teachers with a positive spirituality and that there are also examples of how spirituality affects teachers and their teaching negatively. Pargament et al. (1998) provide us with the evidence that negative religious coping can have detrimental effects on people who have a fearful or punishing view of God, the divine or a higher power. Section 5.4 of this chapter will provide some insight into possible negative effects of spirituality on pedagogy when discussing the tensions the participants felt about incorporating spirituality in the classroom. However, in this study, no examples of negative impacts of spirituality on teacher identity or pedagogy could be found.

Key insight: Spirituality is a potent resilience factor and coping strategy for these highly spiritual Swiss secondary teachers.

5.3 Indirect Spirituality in the Classroom

The findings of the third section bring together and also contrast the findings of section one (everything is seen and interpreted through a spiritual lens) and section two (positive spirituality is helpful for the teacher and the students) with section four (teachers restrain themselves from implementing too much spirituality in the classroom). The contrast is quite stark: the participants find spirituality of paramount importance but prefer to implement it only indirectly (by teaching about values), subliminally (by using holidays as anchors), passively (by believing that it works automatically) or silently (mainly through prayer).

Part of the reason for not being more overt may be based on theological assumptions (e.g. the Holy Spirit is “automatically” active through the Christian believer),

denominational experiences (e.g. the teaching of good values in Sunday school) or the state school policies that specifically allow teachers to celebrate Christian holidays with students (AVS, 2017). Yet the participants all state that at times they wish they could do or say more, but they prefer to “stay under the radar”. This inner tension is palpable in most interviews. However, the participants do not feel completely discontent with the way they are implementing their spirituality in the classroom. They also do not necessarily feel that implementing spirituality indirectly is a cop-out. They believe that they can make a spiritual difference by just being present and by praying silently. This view is very different from a secular view that might claim that very little spirituality is actually observable in the participants’ classrooms. In this context, it becomes evident that the impact of spirituality on pedagogy is very difficult to determine and largely depends on worldviews. While the spiritual may be very real and present for one teacher, it may be only superstition for the other. This is especially true for silent prayer which was one of the key strategies of living out spirituality at school for the participants and one of the most prevalent topics in the interviews. Masters and Spielmans (2007) conducted a meta-analysis on the effects of prayer and could not find any evidence that distant intercessory prayer had any discernable effect on the people who were prayed for. Still, in his study with US Baptist high-school teachers, Nelson-Brown (2006) found prayer to be one of the most frequent ways in which teachers would bring their spirituality into schools. Hartwick (2015b) discerned prayer for students to be a substantial component of Wisconsin public school teachers. The psychological literature on prayer portrays many theoretical models about the influence of prayer on mental and physical health (Breslin & Lewis, 2008). Some of the models clearly depend on a specific spiritual worldview (e.g. divine intervention). However, there are also models that are based on Western psychological theory.

These could be relevant in explaining why prayer could be beneficial for teachers even from a non-spiritual standpoint. Koenig (2012) found that prayer provides a sense of control over events. This is what also stood out from the interviews, that the participants would often pray more in difficult social situations. Lambert, Fincham, Stillman, Graham and Beach (2010) show how prayer motivates change in relationships, namely that the one praying develops a more forgiving attitude towards the one he or she is praying for. This seems relevant for teacher student relationships especially with socially challenging students. Various studies also demonstrate the buffering effect of prayer against stress (for a review, see Masters & Spielmans, 2007). According to Pirner (2013), it is remarkable that spirituality is not more of a topic in the literature about teacher stress and burnout. Independent from worldview, one can conclude that prayer has at least a threefold positive influence on teachers: a greater sense of control, more positive relationships and decreased stress. One could also speculate that prayer might be for teachers a potent means of reflection on their professional practice. The constant inner dialogue of prayer - a conscious commentary - and the openness to receive divine or spiritual guidance could help the praying teacher to be a more conscious teacher. While prayer as a consciousness-raising practice is documented in the literature (e.g. Marvis, 2008), no studies specific to teachers could be found.

In general, there is a dearth of empirical literature on how teachers implement their spirituality in the classroom. Most research stems from the US, followed by other Anglo-Saxon countries. Nelson-Brown (2006) found that teachers would use covert strategies of introducing spiritual matters into public high school curriculum, the most prominent being spiritual values and prayer. In a study with US high school teachers

who are religious, White (2014) also found that these teachers would implement spirituality/religiosity through values: they would connect mistakes with the value of forgiveness, would value cooperation more highly than competition and would emphasize the Golden Rule. Fraser and Grootenbroer (2004) report that spiritual teachers in New Zealand would highlight the values of acceptance and non-judgmentalism more in their classrooms. Sikkink (2010) found that the evangelical teacher would “spiritualize teacher practices through prayer” (p. 173). The only study on the topic from the German-speaking area was done by Bohnsack (2009). He interviewed German teachers and found that prayer would also help them develop a greater personal stability (“Seins-Vertrauen”) as teachers in the classroom. These findings suggest that while the socio-political context in Switzerland may be quite different from some of the Anglo-Saxon countries, there seems to be similar ways for teachers in Western societies to bring their personal spirituality into the classroom through indirect or covert means.

Key insight: These highly spiritual Swiss secondary teachers often bring their spirituality into the classroom through indirect means, most prominently through silent prayer.

5.4 Tensions Between Spirituality and Teaching

In discussing how the participants implement their spirituality in indirect or covert forms at school, I have concluded that this is partly because they feel it would be inappropriate to portray it more openly, despite their wish and desire to do so at times. This leads to a key insight from this study: for many, spirituality is a taboo topic in

Swiss public education. This raises important issues and questions that will be discussed in this section.

First of all, we need to revisit why spirituality has become a taboo topic in Swiss education, and why it is looked upon negatively, despite the fact that the research on spirituality in education shows largely positive effects. As shown in the literature review, the topics of religion in schools and of religious teachers have been widely discussed within school administrations, in politics as well as in the media in Switzerland over the last decade, with a largely negative portrayal of the evangelical teacher. In addition, issues with how to best handle certain religious rituals or practices from Muslim students within a school context have added pressure on schools to “handle religion correctly”. Official statements were made that all clearly specified religion to either remain personal or to be taught by specialists (AVS, 2017). Within this debate, not only the fear of teachers being too evangelical but also of being too Muslim probably plays a role. There has been a recent increase in islamophobia in Switzerland (Helbling, 2010). The concept of religious neutrality in schools may therefore have also been put in place to prevent schools from having to accommodate other religions’ rituals such as Muslim prayer times and to prevent Muslim teachers from unduly influencing the children. The research by Akkari, Loomis and Bauer (2011) describes how Muslim teachers in Switzerland have at times been perceived as problematic because of their religion. It seems that keeping lived spirituality and lived religion a taboo at schools is a protective measure in the eyes of school administrators and policy makers.

We have also seen that it is difficult to separate religiousness from spirituality, both for the practitioner and the observer. Most people do not have a clear concept of what spirituality means for them, especially when they do not consider themselves spiritual. This then leads to the tendency to not clearly differentiate between the religious and the spiritual elements. Swiss teachers in public schools face this dilemma. We see clearly e.g. in Rolf's interview that there is a fear of being seen as too religious. There is the assumption held by the participants that being seen as too spiritual would automatically be interpreted as being too religious and having a negative impact on the students (e.g. by proselytizing or indoctrinating). None of the teachers I interviewed wanted to be associated with an expression of Christianity that tries to advance its own worldview and truth. This is despite the fact that there is no school policy (either on a state level or in the individual schools' policies) that explicitly forbids such activities in the schools. This is an interesting contrast to what we see in the US literature. Sehorn (2018) cites examples of teachers and administrators who fight for their right to implement religious and spiritual elements in their schools (e.g. prayer groups). He portrays US communities as divided in regard to religion and spirituality in schools, often with large parts of the population supporting the religious teachers or administrators. In Switzerland, religion generally has a lower importance in society than in the US and is seen with greater skepticism. While the Protestant and Catholic state churches are considered historically grown and culturally relevant institutions, evangelical or Pentecostal churches are often seen in a very negative light and associated with sects or cults (Schaaf, 2017). The spiritual person with Christian roots therefore has to carefully navigate how he expresses himself in order to not be marked as sectarian. It seems that spirituality in Swiss schools is a taboo topic because talking about it could potentially lead to interpersonal conflict due to conflicting views

and values. Keeping spirituality private, implementing it indirectly in the classroom and not positioning oneself too clearly as a spiritual and religious person seems to be a smaller price to pay for the teachers in this study than risking criticism or backlash from colleagues, parents and the administration.

In addition, there seems to be a certain willingness to hold back for the sake of the institution. Pfaff-Czarnezka (2005) points out that while religion and spirituality are not banned at Swiss schools, it is expected that a low profile is maintained to help the schools run smoothly. Maintaining such a low profile, the compromise of living out spirituality covertly at school, is typical for Swiss culture. Rather than engaging in a more open culture war as seen in parts of the US, a marginalization of the religious and spiritual in schools based on the principle of neutrality (Späni, 2003) is largely accepted by Swiss teachers. An interesting recent policy document (AVS, 2017) for all public state schools in Baselland also highlights this tension: it admits that Swiss schools are historically built on a Christian foundation and that Christian holidays can be celebrated and religious symbols can be worn at school; this needs to happen in a neutral way in order to not hurt anyone's religious feelings. A certain self-censorship is seen as necessary to keep the schools running peacefully. This reminds us of the term *values schizophrenia* that Ball (2003) coined for teachers in this context, where personal values conflict with the values commonly accepted in an institutional setting. Van Arragon (2018) observes that "teachers' professional practice is shaped by the boundaries of what is considered appropriate and inappropriate in their schools, some of which are explicit but many of which are implicit commonly accepted sense" (p. 81). A good example of this discourse is Goldshmidt's (2019) analysis of whether it is appropriate to meditate with children in schools. This question of "what is permissible

in schools?” is not limited to spirituality in school but includes all areas of teacher involvement on a personal level. The controversy about how much spirituality should be permissible in the classroom can therefore be positioned within the larger debate about what aspects of identity, relationality and emotionality are permissible in the classroom. Zembylas (2003) observed that teachers would suppress certain aspects of their identity in order to “maintain ‘appropriate’ behavior (and discourse)” (p. 112). As seen in the literature review, Vandrick (1997) calls these aspects *hidden identities*. She lists a large range of such hidden identities or parts of identity in the literature, including ethnic or religious minorities, sexual orientation, political orientation, disabilities, mental illness, HIV, cancer, etc. She concludes that affected teachers “are torn and expend much energy on wondering what they should do, when they should do it, and what the consequences will be.” (p. 154). Similarly, Cooper and Olson (1996) identified the suppression of teachers’ emotional identities and personal voices “in favour of an objective and distanced voice” (p. 87). They conclude that if such voices are silenced, children learn to silence their own voices. Colley (2006) found that in UK nursery education, “correct” emotions were at times described in childcare. Zembylas (2005) identified unwritten emotional rules for teachers. In his studies, teachers identified appropriate and inappropriate emotions for the classroom. These teachers tended to strive for neutrality, believing that showing too many emotions was a sign of being unprofessional. The participants in this study also come across as quite self-critical, wanting to avoid some of the more problematic aspects of teacher spirituality and religiousness highlighted in the literature: witnessing to and converting students (Varghese, 2007), conflicts between religion and science in the curriculum (Mansour, 2008; Pirner, 2013), or interpreting events through a religious or spiritual lens (Johnson, 2016). However, Nelson-Brown (2006) makes the point

that “the connection of religion and education is not a contest of neutrality versus a value-laden ideology, but of ideology versus ideology, values versus values” (p. 4). Zembylas (2005) also concludes that such discourses about neutrality are a myth. Van Arragon (2018) argues similarly that while the spiritual and religious are often quickly equated with indoctrination, the distinction in general between education and indoctrination is not always clear. It is interesting to note that the neutrality of the Swiss education system is not being questioned by the participants of this study. They try to fit in instead of positioning their worldview as equally valid. In this context, Nelson-Brown (2006) asks:

If an ideological voice is silenced or an affiliative identity group is pushed to the margins or forced to ‘pass’ in order to get along with the acceptable limits of school culture, have we misused the school apparatus? (p. 5)

If we assume that there is no such thing as a neutral school system and take into account the prominent role of teacher identity in the teaching process (Korthagen, 2004) and the beneficial impact of spirituality on teachers and children, it seems that holding back for the sake of peace is a big price to pay. Mayes (2001) calls such deliberate restraint “moral violence”:

We...teach with power and authenticity and in a way that does not force us to do moral violence to ourselves and our students by ‘bracketing off’ the religious dimension of lives as if it were intellectually irrelevant. (p. 491)

The feeling that one should hide part of one’s identity needs to be examined in the context of social justice at schools. White (2009) points out that religion is often omitted from multiculturalism and that religion as a part of teacher identity has not yet been explored much while aspects such as ethnicity, gender or class have received

much greater attention. Nelson-Brown (2006) argues that the same principles that demand recognition of someone's ethnicity, gender, class, skin color or other identity feature should also include recognition of someone's religious identity. Stern (2017) adds to this point by discussing the pressure at schools to be religiously neutral. He stresses that any sort of forced neutrality is more a form of exclusion than inclusion:

When pupils and staff enter a school, they enter as whole human beings and they cannot therefore enter stripped of their identity, whether that be religious, sexual, political or any other element of identity. It may seem obvious that those in school are there as whole human beings, but it is not. (p. 17)

By silencing themselves in matters of spirituality and religion, one wonders if the participants also indirectly contribute to the silencing of alternative ways of knowing. Doetzel (2018) believes that "the spiritual dimension of people's lives, which reflects heart wisdom, is an important source of learning" (p. 1). According to her, such heart wisdom has no room in most educational systems but would have the potential to "move students' hearts with forces of love, hope, faith and compassion" (p. 2). Similarly, Arieti and Wilson (2003) claim that the "human brain wants to know, the human heart wants to believe". On the one side there are the proponents of a positivistic view which marginalizes spiritual ways of knowing and disregards the theological or metaphysical as something that cannot be empirically verified. On the other side are the ones who see the inclusion of the spiritual as a more progressive path (Helliwell, 1999) and a means to social justice that "is about honoring the sacredness and wholeness of life and moving past a dichotomization that results in oppression of people" (Doetzel, 2018, p. 5). The evident clash of worldviews can be placed within the larger debate about what should count as knowledge and whose

knowledge should count (Apple, 2014; Kelly et al., 2008; Yandell, 2014). Yandell (2014) for example calls for the inclusion of competing understandings, interests and voices. Kelly et al. (2008) argue for including “knowledges and knowledge-making practices of cultural and linguistic minorities, women, and socioeconomically marginalized communities” (p. vii). Le Grange and Mika (2018) speak of the “growing awareness of the marginalization of subordinated peoples’ knowledges in an era of globalization” (p. 501). They offer an indigenous perspective and describe indigenous knowledge as “knowledge that is living, active and dynamic and can therefore not be owned, possessed or controlled. Knowledge is intimately embedded in how we relate to one another and the more-than-human-world” (p. 499). These dynamic, active and relational aspects of knowing are similar to the experiences of receiving wisdom from a higher power described by the participants of this study. Proponents of spiritual ways of knowing argue for an integration of mind, heart and spirit and against the dichotomy of scientific versus spiritual. They remind us that students come to class with a wide variety of experiences and views of how the world works; they invite the teachers to meet the students where they are. They question the status quo in which the dominant culture decides which knowledge is correct and which is not. Van Arragon (2018) observes that

who decides what can and cannot be ‘reasonably accommodated’ is a matter of great interest for religious minorities who experience their minority status in being granted space which can as easily be withdrawn. (p. 98)

I believe his observation applies to students as well as to teachers, and it affects both groups. The participants in this study seem insecure about how much space is being granted for their spirituality. This leads to a covering up of parts of their spirituality

and thus of some of who they are. They do not offer some of their most treasured “possession” to the students. They therefore cannot teach to the fullest. At the same time, they thus deprive their students of experiencing a different way of knowing, of encountering a worldview that goes beyond the positivistic, of being allowed to question the dominant ways of knowing, and possibly of being encouraged that their own worldview or way of knowing is also valid.

A number of authors (e.g. Dei, 2012; Musisi, 2018; Shahjahan, 2009; Wade, 2006) argue for implementing spirituality in education as a means of decolonializing the classroom and the mind. They claim that Eurocentric education systems reproduce colonial ways of knowing and limit the potential for learning for many students. Musisi (2018) observes that African spirituality has frequently been ridiculed or belittled and viewed as inferior to Western science. He concludes that

the typical classroom in today’s era of neo-liberalism is ever more subjugated by techno-globalism, standardized testing, corporate agendas, and institutional reforms designed to eliminate concerns for spirituality in the curriculum. (p. 96)

While decolonialization is not an issue in Switzerland, the fact remains that there is a dominant Eurocentric and positivistic ontology and epistemology that marginalizes students and teachers who acknowledge alternative ways of knowing. Hoeg (2018) claims that spirituality in the classroom can lead to a change of ontology and epistemology especially in science education. Wane (2006) shows that spiritual practices in the classroom can soften dominant ways of knowing and have the potential to foster more holistic or progressive teaching and enhance liberatory work and emancipation. I agree with Dei (2012) when he urges us to challenge the “narrow

conceptualizations of what counts as science, intellectuality, and critical inquiry” (p. 114). What can be learned for a Swiss context from these proponents of decolonialization through spirituality is the strong sense that a person must be seen as a whole being - physical, mental, emotional, cultural and spiritual – and that an education system is only just if it allows both the educator as well as the student to be fully who they are in each of these aspects.

Key insight: Because spirituality is a taboo topic in Swiss public education, these highly spiritual Swiss secondary teachers are hindered in teaching to their fullest and students are deprived of encountering or validating alternative ways of knowing.

5.5 Reflecting on Spirituality in Education

The final finding in this study was that the participants considered talking about and reflecting on spirituality in education to be helpful. This stood out in contrast to the fact that they all said it was not really a topic they could talk about with their colleagues. If spirituality is seen as a taboo topic at a school, then it is difficult to have dialogue and reflection on a professional level with peers. This research project may therefore have been somewhat of a catalyst for the participants to reflect on the topic.

Teacher reflection has been an important topic in the literature both on teacher education as well as on teaching practice. The prominent and much-discussed meta-analysis by Hattie (2008) identified reflection as a key component contributing to high-impact teaching. Boody (2008) found four main categories of teacher reflection in the literature: retrospection, problem solving, critical reflection and reflection-in-action. Especially critical reflection is seen as a means of promoting culturally

relevant pedagogy by reflecting on ethical, moral and political contexts, as “an effective means of meeting the academic and social needs of culturally diverse students” (Howard, 2003, p.196). In regard to spirituality, critical reflection requires the educator to acknowledge how his or her worldview can influence the students’ self-conception and to realize that his or her beliefs can also at times cause resistance on the part of the students (Howard, 2003). In a similar manner, Feucht, Lunn Brownlee and Shraw (2017) speak of epistemic reflexivity which explores personal meaning systems and how they influence teaching, learning and decision making. White (2010) points out that while the literature on multicultural education encourages teacher reflection in order to interact more adequately with students of diverse backgrounds, it has not been explored much yet how teachers should reflect on their religious or spiritual aspects of life. She proposes 5 key themes and associated “sacred questions” that can help a teacher reflect on the conscious and unconscious ways that religion or spirituality impact teacher practice. The 5 themes are: meaning of life, reasons for teaching, purpose of teaching, view of other cultural groups, impact of religion on daily life. In this study, we saw that the participants reflected on all of the themes that White (2010) proposes. They carefully examined how their personal spirituality influences the students and how much of it seemed appropriate in the classroom in order to grant the students enough freedom to maintain their own worldviews and to not cause resistance from students, parents or colleagues.

In addition to the four categories of teacher reflection mentioned above, Boody (2008) added a fifth one: teacher reflection as teacher change, and teacher change as moral response. He identified love as the driving force for such reflection that leads to change: love for the well-being of the students. When teachers reflect on the way they

affect their students both in positive and negative ways, love might compel them to implement more of the positive and omit more of the negative. I believe that we have encountered similar narratives in this study. The six teachers deeply care for their students. They are interested in genuine relationship-building. Being a teacher for them is more than just teaching in a sense of transferring knowledge. It is a holistic commitment to the students, to their well-being and their personal growth. They sense that spirituality can play an important role in fulfilling this commitment. While reflecting on spirituality in the classroom, they come to the conclusion that it is beneficial for the students, and they all express the desire to implement more of it at times.

Key insight: Reflection on the spiritual aspects of pedagogy helped these highly spiritual Swiss secondary teachers understand the valuable ways in which spirituality contributes to their pedagogical practice.

6 Conclusions

In this concluding chapter, the key findings of the study will be restated in light of the research questions with the intention of reflecting on the “*now what?*”, on some possible practical implications for Swiss secondary school teachers and administrators. Also, the strengths and limitations of the study and areas of further research as well as the dissemination plan will be discussed. Finally, it will be considered what contribution this study makes to knowledge.

6.1 Key Findings

As stated in the introduction chapter as well as in the methodology chapter, the main research question of this study was “*How does the spirituality of highly spiritual teachers influence their pedagogy in Swiss public secondary schools?*”, with three sub-questions: 1) How do highly spiritual teachers define their own spirituality? 2) How has this spirituality impacted their identity as teachers? 3) How has their spirituality impacted their pedagogical practice and their relationships within the school? The findings section of the study showed that each of these questions had been answered in the six participants’ accounts, with the following key insights:

- Spirituality functions as an organizing principle for the personal and professional life of the participants.

- Spirituality can serve as a means to greater teacher resilience as well as a coping strategy against stress for the participants.

- Spirituality is implemented by the participants indirectly or covertly in the classroom, most often through silent prayer.
- These highly spiritual Swiss secondary teachers would prefer to implement more of their spirituality in the classroom but feel that this is often not permissible, that it is somewhat of a taboo topic. Spirituality thus becomes a partly suppressed aspect of their teacher identity.
- The participants see spirituality as an alternative way of knowing, yet there seems to be little room in the modern Swiss classroom for alternative ways of knowing.
- Reflection on the spiritual aspects of pedagogy has helped these highly spiritual Swiss secondary teachers understand the valuable ways in which spirituality contributes to their pedagogical practice.

As stated in the discussion section, the first three key insights can also be found in and confirmed by the literature on teacher spirituality from other Western countries such as the US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the UK or Finland. A first conclusion that can be drawn from this study is that despite the different socio-economic, religious and political contexts, the Swiss participants' teacher spirituality has many parallels to Christian teacher spirituality as it is portrayed in the literature of other Western countries. It is important to note that the similarities seem more prevalent than the differences. The benefits and challenges perceived by the participants are surprisingly similar even between the US studies and the present one, despite the fact that religion

plays a much more pronounced role in US society. Practically speaking, this means that the international literature on Christian teacher spirituality can be seen as potentially relevant also for the Swiss context, at least as far as the accounts of these six teachers go. Especially the existing qualitative studies can help highly spiritual Swiss teachers identify with the experience of their peers in other countries and can help them reflect on what this means for their personal context.

A further important insight of the present study is that for the participants, spirituality is central to who they are and what they do. This means that spirituality is more than a beneficial add-on to their teaching but rather the foundation. We can therefore conclude that the question “Should teachers implement their spirituality in the classroom?” misses the mark, because it is impossible for these teachers to entirely split off their spirituality from their teaching. A more fruitful question would therefore be: “in what overt and / or covert ways can a highly spiritual teacher implement his or her spirituality in the classroom so that it can be beneficial for everyone?”. In order to answer this question, a more open dialogue about spirituality amongst teachers, administrators and parents could be helpful. The question of what is permissible in the classroom could be addressed. As long as the topic is taboo in schools, constructive reflection and dialogue will be prohibited. Studies such as the present one could function as a door-opener for such dialogue. However, it is important to note that such a dialogue would need to be beneficial for everyone involved. This means acknowledging and accepting that schools have to deal with a number of pressing issues and that spirituality is most likely not very high on the list of priorities, that not everyone is interested in the topic of spirituality or in such dialogue, that some people

do not believe that the spiritual exists and that there are possible disadvantages of implementing spirituality in the classroom.

Another conclusion from this study is that for the six participants, spirituality generally has a positive effect on their teaching practice and well-being. This stands in contrast to the fact that very little attention has been given to spirituality in education in Switzerland. While teacher stress is one of the prevalent topics of discussion in Swiss education and teacher attrition is at its highest rate ever, the topic of spirituality is virtually inexistent in the debates. Even when topics such as *mindfulness* receive greater attention in schools, it is often explicitly stated that these are not to be seen as spiritual, but as a relaxation or concentration technique. It might be helpful to advocate for greater awareness in the Swiss education community about the influence of meaning systems (including, but not limited to, spirituality) on pedagogical practice, resilience and teacher job satisfaction.

Lastly, and in my view most importantly, the study shows that spirituality has both positive and problematic impacts on the participants' teacher identity. The positive aspects are a sense of calling, a sense of meaning and purpose, the notion of not being alone, of having divine guidance, and the sense of having influence on situations through prayer. These positive effects of spirituality are contrasted by a feeling these teachers have that they need to hide a part of who they are in order to be acceptable. Because spirituality is perceived as a taboo topic in schools, these highly spiritual teachers experience inner conflict. Because they feel that what is most central in their lives can only be included covertly into their professional identity, they remain torn. Thus, they cannot teach to their fullest. Again, open reflection and dialogue in a safe

space could help here to discern which elements of spirituality are beneficial for the school community and which ones should rather remain private in order to find the balance between granting personal freedom and preventing indoctrination.

6.2 Recommendations for School Communities and Educators

I believe that the findings of this study, while limited in scope and generalizability, can nevertheless be relevant for the Swiss secondary education community and have the potential to make a useful contribution towards improving the situation of teachers who feel marginalized or feel like they need to hide an aspect of their identity. The first two recommendations (a and b) are therefore directed towards addressing the issue of marginalized or hidden teacher identities.

a) A first recommendation is to foster the creation of *safe spaces* (see Roestone, 2014, for a conceptualization of the term) within schools where teachers and students can reflect together on what written or unwritten rules or expectations the school has in place about certain identities (spiritual / religious, LGBT, immigrant, racial minority etc.) and why. If possible, they could practice vulnerability and talk about personal experiences with these identities in the classroom or amongst staff. Reflection and conversation about these topics could help reduce prejudices and eliminate the sense of taboo. It is clear that such safe spaces cannot be quickly implemented top-down by the school administration. Examples of how such safe spaces can be fostered have been shown in the literature review (section 2.2.2).

b) The second recommendation is to introduce a short module in teacher education programs about teacher identity, professionalism and about what is permissible /

beneficial in the classroom (according to the current debate portrayed in the discussion section 5.4) as well as about marginalized / hidden teacher identities. Such modules do not currently exist in Switzerland, and the conversation about teacher identity is still very limited in teacher colleges.

A second set of recommendations (c – e) is looking at including spirituality in meaningful ways in the Swiss education system. These recommendations are in connection with, but also go beyond, the findings of this study. They are ideas that came from the engagement with the findings as well as the literature discussed in this thesis.

c) Spirituality could be considered as an additional factor that can contribute to healthy schools in Switzerland. It could therefore be added as an additional quality criterion in the guidelines of the *Gesunde Schule Schweiz* (Healthy Schools Switzerland) network. An example of such a quality criterion could be “Our school is open to dialogue about spirituality in the classroom”.

d) Critical engagement with spirituality could be included in the new curriculum component *Ethics, Religion, Community*. This would mean that a larger dialogue about what is meant by spirituality and how spirituality is practiced in different ways could take place when teaching about religion. “Ethics, Religion and Community” seems to be a fitting framework to tether the topic to the official curriculum.

e) School communities could be made more aware of the existing debate about alternative ways of knowing (such as spiritual knowing, intuition, indigenous knowledge etc., see literature review section 2.7) in the school system. This debate has largely by-passed Switzerland. In an increasingly diverse population characterized by immigration, the various minorities' ways of knowing – as they differ from the Swiss status quo – could be taken into account and presented at schools as valid alternative options.

6.3 Dissemination

I intend to publish the results of this study in a widely read Swiss teacher journal such as *Schweizerische Lehrerzeitung* or *Journal für Lehrerinnen- und Lehrerbildung*. Besides publishing the findings, I intend to write up a one-page summary of the study's findings and make it available to other high school staff. Findings could also be presented at the yearly national Swiss conference on Spirituality and Health in Langenthal or at various educational conferences. I could also imagine giving keynote lectures or teacher professional development seminars on the topic.

6.4 Strengths, Limitations and Implications for Further Research

The strengths of this study lay in its research design and method. The in-depth interviews with only six participants allowed for great depth. The repeat interviews allowed the researcher to reflect on the content of the initial interview and to ask follow-up questions. It also allowed the participants to reflect on the topic and to bring the fruit of this reflection into the second interview as well as into their teaching practice (as reported in section 4.6 and discussed in section 5.5). It seemed thus to be a mutually beneficial process. The direct quotes from the interviews bring the topic to

life and help to make it approachable to the reader. Also, strong themes could be identified in the interview data. The themes that were used in the findings section were prevalent in most or all of the accounts and were touched upon by each participant multiple times throughout the interviews. The method of IPA allowed for a very detailed analytical process of each interview, something that would not have been possible had the number of interviews been much larger.

The limitations of this study are defined by the purposive sampling and by the small number of participants. An unintended result of the purposive sampling was that all participants practiced a Christian spirituality. While such a homogenous sample is favorable for IPA research, it is clear that the participants only represent one very specific worldview and spirituality. The study therefore says little about what e.g. a teacher practicing Buddhist spirituality or secular spirituality would experience. In addition, the sampling only included secondary school teachers. Experience e.g. from primary school teachers might again differ considerably. The fact that only six teachers were interviewed also contributes to the realization that the findings of this study can only be generalized analytically by comparing them to the existing research literature and to the experiences of other teachers.

Further research on this topic is needed in Switzerland. This is especially true for qualitative research. More qualitative studies would allow for comparison and for greater generalizability. The following study designs would be in my view especially interesting: a) studies with teachers who practice other spiritualities, b) studies with teachers who teach on different levels (especially kindergarten and primary school), and c) studies with teachers who have been teaching for a long time (20 years or

more). It would be interesting to be able to differentiate what aspects of this study's participants' experiences are due to the Christian part of their spirituality, what aspects are due to the level they teach at and also how spirituality influences a long-term teaching career.

6.5 Contribution to Knowledge

The present study contributes to and advances the existing research literature and theory in educational research as well as to general knowledge about best practices in education in the following ways:

- a) It is the first qualitative study on the topic with Swiss high school teachers. As seen in the literature review, there is a dearth of research on the topic in the German speaking area, with only a handful of quantitative studies. The qualitative nature of the study brings the issues faced by the participants to light and can therefore be a valuable contribution to the current debate in Switzerland about spiritual and religious teachers in the education system. The study also highlights some of the unique historical and political aspects that are relevant when discussing spirituality in Swiss education.

- b) This study shows that many issues of spirituality that are true for teachers in other Western societies are also true for these six Swiss teachers. The study therefore sheds light on the similarities between the different international contexts that have been analyzed and on the fact that research results in this area are potentially applicable across borders.

- c) The study brings to light a tension that some highly spiritual teachers in Switzerland experience but is not talked about and thus far has not been documented in the research literature: these teachers often feel like they cannot completely be who they would want to be because spirituality is a taboo topic in Swiss public education. They need to hide or suppress this part of who they are despite the fact that they are convinced that lived spirituality in the classroom would be beneficial for their students. In this capacity, the study adds to the literature about marginalized and hidden teacher identities and presents a Swiss perspective on hidden spiritual teacher identities.
- d) The study challenges the prevalent assumption in the Swiss education system that there is only one valid way of knowing (rational or scientific knowing) and proposes spiritual knowing as a complementing way of knowing. It thus contributes to the wider literature that examines what should count as knowledge as well as whose knowledge should count in an educational setting.

Overall, this study identifies spirituality as a generally beneficial yet contested component of Swiss secondary education for the participants. It shows that as spirituality is marginalized in the schools, this affects how the six highly spiritual teachers teach. As they sense that spirituality is taboo, they hide this part of their identity and only offer it to their students in covert ways. It is therefore important to bring to light the issue of marginalized or hidden teacher identities, so that a more open dialogue of these in general and about the role and place of spirituality in schools in particular can take place. It seems that such a dialogue would be beneficial for the entire school community. In conclusion, I believe that the statement quoted at the beginning of this thesis is of great importance also for the Swiss context. It captures

some of the essence of what has been found out through this study. It can be seen as a moral imperative for the highly spiritual teacher:

We...teach with power and authenticity and in a way that does not force us to do moral violence to ourselves and our students by 'bracketing off' the religious dimension of lives as if it were intellectually irrelevant. (Mayes, 2001, p. 491)

7 References

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8 Appendices

Appendix I	Spirituality Assessment Questionnaires
Appendix II	Interview Schedule
Appendix III	Reflexivity Exercise Prior to Data Analysis
Appendix IV	Example Pages of Coded Transcript
Appendix V	Example Chronological List of Emergent Themes
Appendix VI	Example of Emergent Themes Clustered Into Superordinate Themes
Appendix VII	Example of a Subordinate Theme Across All Cases
Appendix VIII	Master Table of Meta-Themes and Subordinate Themes

(Appendices I and II have been translated from German to English)

Appendix I– Spirituality Assessment Questionnaires

Questionnaire 1 – LeBe Assessment

	5 Entirely true	4	3	2	1 Not true at all
Religion plays an important part in my life.					
Prayer is important to me.					
There are things that I would call holy.					
I receive strength from my faith.					
I believe in miracles.					
I feel like I am part of a larger whole.					
I believe there is a deeper meaning to my life.					
I feel that there is a different reality out there to the one we know.					

Questionnaire 2 – TPV Scale

	Entirely true	Rather true	Rather not true	Not true at all
I feel connected to a higher reality / a higher being / God. I can trust it even in difficult times.				
Sometimes I feel that my life is being guided by a higher power.				
Religious practices (i.e. prayer, mantras, religious songs, meditation) help me in difficult situations.				
My soul lives on after death.				
I try to entrust myself to a higher power / higher reality.				
I am part of a larger whole, in which I am secure.				
I call myself religious (even if I do not belong to a faith community)				
I am a human being with body and intellect. I am also inseparably connected to the universe.				
There is some fortune and misfortune in life that surpass my abilities to explain.				
We humans cannot determine everything. There is a higher reality / higher being / God, in whom I can trust.				
I have made the experience that I feel at one with the world and the cosmos.				

Appendix II – Interview Schedule

Introductory Questions

1. How long have you been teaching?
2. How long have you been at your present school?
3. What level and what subjects do you teach?

Section 1 – Personal Spirituality

1. In general, what does spirituality mean to you?
2. How do you define spirituality for yourself?
3. Please tell me about some of your personal spiritual practices.
4. How important is spirituality in your life?
5. What is the relationship between spirituality and religiosity in your personal experience?
6. What gives your life meaning?

Section 2 – Teacher spirituality

1. Has your spirituality influenced your career choice? How?
2. How does your spirituality shape your pedagogy?
Purpose of education, view of children, role of teacher
3. How does it shape your teacher identity?
4. How does it affect your personal well-being at work?
Handling of stress etc.

Section 3 – Spirituality in the classroom

7. In what ways do you incorporate spirituality in your teaching praxis?

How and to what extent do you do that?

Can you give me concrete examples?

Why do you do that?

What are the perceived benefits?

What are the drawbacks/difficulties?

Can you tell me about situations where it has been especially helpful / unhelpful?

Have you experienced (inner or outer) pressure to include/exclude spirituality?

8. How do you experience spirituality in the classroom affect your students?

According to your spirituality, what is your responsibility towards others?

Is it ok for your personal spirituality to affect students?

Does it affect different students differently?

Have you had significant positive or negative experiences?

In your view, is it important to share your spirituality with your students and why?

9. How do you deal with students' different spiritualities?

Are you trying to convince students of your own views?

What is your religious group's view on different cultural groups?

10. How do you see your spirituality affect your colleagues / your school / your work with parents?

How do you think your teacher colleagues see your spirituality? Do they know about it?

Have you heard of the debate about fundamentalist teachers in Switzerland? If so, what do you think about it?

11. Have you experienced other teachers incorporating spirituality into their teaching praxis (when you were a student or colleagues of yours)?

What did you like about it?

What did you experience as problematic?

12. Has spirituality ever been a topic that has come up in conversation at your school? (amongst peers, with parents etc.)

Does the school have official guidelines about such topics?

13. Are there ever inner conflicts for you between your personal spiritual beliefs about truth and the ones stated in the curriculum?

14. Is there anything else you would like to share on the topic?

Appendix III – Reflexivity Exercise Prior to Data Analysis

1. Why am I carrying out this study?

As a former secondary school teacher who has always been interested in spirituality and who uses spiritual practices (contemplative prayer) on an almost daily basis, I have been teaching at faith based and secular schools and have always wondered how to implement my personal spirituality well in a secular school setting.

2. What do I hope to achieve with this research?

I hope to learn how other teachers implement their spirituality in their teaching praxis. I also hope to shed some light on the benefits as well as the challenges and drawbacks of implementing spirituality in the classroom.

3. What is my relationship to the topic being investigated?

Am I an insider or outsider?

I am definitely an insider in respect to Christian spirituality in the classroom. However, concerning other forms of spirituality I consider myself an outsider.

Do I empathize with the participants and their experience?

I do empathize with the participants and their experience because I have been in their position as a former teacher in public education who considers himself highly spiritual and have had some similar experiences.

4. Who am I, and how might I influence the research I am conducting in terms of age, sex, class, ethnicity, sexuality, disability and any other relevant cultural, political or social factors?

I am a 40 year-old Caucasian middle-class heterosexual male without disabilities. I am Protestant and would consider myself religious. I have politically liberal views but am not directly politically active. I am demographically quite close to the participants in this study. I have about 10 years of teaching experience, roughly 5 years at a faith-based school and 5 years at various secular schools.

5. How do I feel about the work?

I am very curious about how other teachers experience their spirituality in the classroom. I am keen to understand their experiences.

Are there external pressures influencing the work?

This is research for my PhD dissertation, so there is some pressure to finish this research project successfully.

6. How will my subject position influence the analysis?

I believe that my insider position will add some strength to the analysis as I will be able to pick up on certain nuances that an outsider may not. On the other hand, there could be some unwarranted influence as I may come to conclusions prematurely because I might tell myself “I know this. I have experienced this too.” Here it will be important to bracket off my own experiences as much as this is possible.

7. How might the outside world be influencing the presentation of findings?

I foresee that some constraints of academic writing (i.e. choosing certain quotes and leaving others out) will limit the depth of presentation to a certain degree. Within the word limit of the dissertation, it will not be possible to fully represent all the experiences. I will need to make choices in what I choose to present.

8. How might the findings impact on the participants? Might they lead to harm and, if so, how can I justify this happening?

The participants will most likely reflect in depth on their personal spirituality and on how they implement it in their teaching praxis. I anticipate this to be a positive learning experience for all involved. I do not foresee this doing any harm to the participants.

9. How might the findings impact on the discipline and my career in it? Might they lead to personal problems, and how prepared am I to deal with these should they arise?

Spirituality is still a topic that is often being viewed with suspicion in the public school context. I can imagine that a dissertation that examines spirituality in schools may not always be beneficial for my personal career advancement in the public school sector, but I am prepared to accept such negative consequences.

10. How might the findings impact on wider understandings of the topic?

My hope would be that the findings help to advance the conversation about spirituality in public school. I would hope to present these findings to schools and teachers in Switzerland.

How might your colleagues respond to the research?

Some might find it very interesting. Some will most certainly be quite indifferent to the topic and some might disapprove of the content of the research.

What would the newspapers make of the research?

There has been a debate about fundamentalist teachers in the Swiss public school sector in the media. I believe this research would help to shed a more nuanced light on the issue.

Does the research have any implications for future funding (of similar research and/or related organizations)?

No.

What political implications might arise as a result of the research?

In an ideal case, the results would be taken notice of at a political level and would influence policy writing around the issues of spirituality in schools.

(Source of questions: Langdridge, 2007, p. 59).

Appendix IV – Example Pages of Coded Transcript

Interview Beatrice

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4 *I: Vielen Dank, dass du hier mitmachst. Für deine Einwilligung. Am*
5 *Anfang einfach einige Einstiegsfragen, um etwas warm zu werden.*
6 *Wie lange unterrichtest du schon?*
7 B: Ich unterrichte seit sieben Jahren. Aber erst seit fünf Jahren seit *Jungelweien fehlt sich*
8 Abschluss der Ausbildung. *erfahren*
9 *I: Und hast du jetzt eine Klassenlehrerinnen-Funktion?*
10 B: Ja.
11 *I: Ok. Und wie lange bist du jetzt schon an dieser Schule, wo du*
12 *jetzt unterrichtest?*
13 B: Seit sieben Jahren (lacht). *nur an einem Ort*
14 *I: Ok, und wenn du vielleicht noch die Stufen und Fächer sagen*
15 *könntest, welche du unterrichtest.*
16 B: Also ich unterrichte in der mittleren Stufe (Niveau E) und ich
17 unterrichte Deutsch, Englisch, Geschichte und Handarbeit. *sehr verschiedene Fächer*
18 *I: Ok, also in dieser Studie geht es um Lehrerspiritualität. Das Wort*
19 *Spiritualität wird immer wieder vorkommen. Wie würdest du dies*
20 *für dich definieren?*
21 B: Diese Frage habe ich schon gelesen im Vornherein. Das ist gar *schwierig*
22 *nicht so einfach.* (lacht) Dann habe ich mir überlegt, Spiritualität *verlegen?*
23 *ist eigentlich... für mich so wie das Bewusstsein von einer höheren* *findet keine beste*
24 *Macht Also, dass man sich dem bewusst ist und es auch sucht.* *Definition*
25 *Verbindung sucht zu einer höheren Macht oder zu anderen* *aktiv*
26 *Mächten...Kräften, die nicht sichtbar sind.* *2x Verbindungs-Be-*
27 *I: Also ja, das ist ja ganz individuell...* *ziehung* *2x*
28 B: Ja, das war eben noch spannend für mich, das einmal zu *positiv eingestellt*
29 überlegen, was das eigentlich ist für mich. Vielleicht würde ich *neue Gedanken*
30 *I: Was bedeutet Spiritualität für dich?* *Unsicherheit*
31 B: Es ist mir eigentlich recht wichtig. Weil es mir viel Halt gibt im *wann eigentlich? Def.*
32 *Leben. So das Gefühl zu haben, es gibt noch etwas anderes, nicht* *Spir. gefühlt*
33 *nur das irdische, das sichtbar ist.... Darum suche ich das schon* *3x 2x*
34 *auch sehr. Und es ist für mich so wie eine Verbundenheit zu Gott* *Beziehung*
35 *dann auch spürbar.* *geföhlt*
36 *I: Wie machst du das ganz praktisch und konkret?*
37 B: Mit Musik vor allem. Das ist so mein erster Zugang zur *Zugang*
38 *Spiritualität, zu Gott, weil ich das Gefühl habe, ich kann mich dann* *2x*
39 *sehr öffnen auch, mich fallen lassen und die Sachen, die mich* *Vertrauen*
40 *sonst beschäftigen, kann ich gut mal etwas ausblenden, weil man* *coping*
41 *so in einer anderen Sphäre ist. Dann ist mein Geist sehr offen für* *geistliche Welt*
42 *das Reden von Gott, weil ich dann sehr zugänglich bin. Und ich* *Beziehung*
43 *glaube Musik hilft mir einfach sehr, um eben wegzukommen vom* *coping*
44 *Alltag gerade in dem Moment. Und mich nicht um mich drehen,*
45 *sondern einen anderen Fokus einzunehmen.... Und beten ist* *neue Sichtweise*

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Spir. = Beziehung

Religiosität negativ

Spir. = positiv

Rituale sind wichtig

Def. schwierig

natürlich auch ein Punkt, der mir hilft, die Spiritualität zu leben. Und auch das Gespräch mit Freunden über solche Themen finde ich ist auch sehr hilfreich. Oder da habe ich das Gefühl kommt Verbindung zu Gott zustande. Auch im Gespräch mit Freunden, die Gott nicht kennen, die Interesse zeigen und wo ich dann von dem erzählen kann. Da spüre ich Gott jeweils auch sehr stark.

I: Gibt es einen Zusammenhang zwischen deiner Spiritualität und Religiosität? Würdest du dich selber auch als religiös bezeichnen? Oder wie sieht das bei dir aus mit diesen zwei Begriffen?

B: Da hatte ich auch etwas Mühe beim Ankreuzen [im Assessment] wegen religiös. Also für mich hat das so einen negativen Nebengeschmack. Also Religiosität ist etwas, das für mich eher negativ behaftet ist. Darum weiss ich nicht, ob ich mich eigentlich als religiös bezeichnen würde. Ich würde mich als gläubig bezeichnen.

I: Was heisst „gläubig“?

B: Dass ich an ein höheres Wesen, in meinem Fall jetzt an Gott, glaube.

I: Also Religiosität hat ja auch mit Kirche zu tun und mit Strukturen und Ritualen und so. Gibt es dies in deinem Leben irgendwo, dass das wichtig ist?

B: Ja, das ist schon wichtig für mich, das stimmt. Also ich bin Teil einer Kirche, ich arbeite dort auch aktiv mit. Und es ist ein grosser Teil meiner Freizeit, die ich dort verbringe. Aber ich habe dies nie in Verbindung gebracht, dass dies jetzt ein Teil von Religiosität ist. Für mich ist dies eher das Ausüben oder eben das Praktizieren von Glaube. Vielleicht ist dies Religiosität...ich weiss es nicht genau. Aber für mich ist Religiosität etwas sehr Starres. Und eben so mit Regeln und Gesetzen. Und das erlebe ich gar nicht so bei uns in der Kirche. Aber ja, ich gehe in eine Kirche.

I: Eben, auch hier gibt es bei den Definitionen ja eine solche Bandbreite, dass nicht eine richtig oder falsch ist, aber viele definieren die Religiosität als diese Dinge, die durch die Glaubensgemeinschaft nicht vorgegeben...aber eben Rituale wie das Abendmahl, Taufe, Gottesdienst...und dann als Teil dieses Ganzen die Spiritualität, der Kern davon. Dies ist eine häufige Definition, aber eben, es gibt ganz viel Verschiedene. Viele bringen ja Spiritualität auch mit den existentiellen, mit den Sinnfragen in Verbindung. Was gibt deinem Leben Sinn?

B:Das finde ich eine sehr schwierige Frage...ehrlich gesagt....und weil ich mit dem Glauben aufgewachsen bin und das für mich schon etwas sehr Selbstverständliches ist....wäre jetzt meine christliche Antwort logischerweise „der Glaube an Gott“. Aber manchmal spüre ich dies nicht so, dass das meinem Leben

anderer Zugang

es geht um Gott

geföhlt

unsicher

Rel = negativ

sieht sich positiv

gläubig = positiv

Definition

Betonung

Spir. wichtig

Rituale

unsicher Definitionsversuch

negativ

negativ

es hat mit Erleben zu tun

oft schwierige Fragen

Spir. ist selbstverständlich

90 Sinn gibt. Wahrscheinlich ist es aber so....aber ich kann das leider
 91 eben nicht wirklich beantworten.
 92 I: Ok. Sind dies manchmal Fragen, mit denen du dich auch noch
 93 auseinandersetzt?
 94 B: Ja, ja...also logisch gibt meinem Sinn Freundschaft, Freude,
 95 Musik...logisch gibt die Beziehung zu Gott meinem Leben auch
 96 Sinn. Also das gibt schon alles meinem Leben Sinn. Aber gibt es
 97 meinem Leben wirklich Sinn? Mit dem habe ich schon seit
 98 längerer Zeit beschäftigt.
 99 I: Also von dem, was ich jetzt gehört habe, würde ich sagen, du
 100 bist sicherlich eine spirituelle Person, das ist dir wichtig. Hat dies
 101 deine damalige Berufswahl beeinflusst?
 102 B: Überhaupt nicht.
 103 I: Überhaupt nicht. Ok. Beeinflusst es deine pädagogischen
 104 Ansichten? Was ich damit meine ist nicht so sehr deine
 105 Berufspraxis, sondern z.B. das Bild des Kindes, die Rolle der
 106 Lehrperson, oder Sinn und Zweck von Schule. Also in allgemeiner,
 107 genereller Form deine Pädagogik.
 108 B: Finde ich auch sehr schwierig zu beurteilen. Ich denke schon,
 109 dass es dies tut. Weil ich versuche schon auch, wenn ich eine
 110 schwierige Situation habe, beeinflusst es mich in dem Sinne, das
 111 ich das auch Gott hinlege. Und auch wünsche, dass sich
 112 Situationen ändern. Und das habe ich auch schon erlebt. Und auch
 113 die Sicht auf die Kinder merke ich, wenn mich etwas hässig macht,
 114 dann versuche ich das abzulegen und eigentlich das Schöne zu
 115 sehen. Ich sehe einfach, dass dies in meinem Beruf nichts
 116 Einzigartiges ist. Das machen andere, die sich jetzt vermutlich als
 117 nicht spirituell bezeichnen würden, genau so, weil sie einfach
 118 Pädagogen sind. Aus meiner Sicht habe ich schon das Gefühl, dass
 119 ich das Kind eben einfach als Geschöpf Gottes sehe. Und dass alle
 120 gleichwertig sind. Und ich versuche das auch so zu leben
 121 eigentlich....Ich habe gerade gemerkt, wegen der Sinnfrage, das
 122 gibt meinem Leben schon auch Sinn, das ist ja ein grosser Teil
 123 meines Lebens, den ich verbringe mit meinen Teenies. Und dort
 124 habe ich schon das Gefühl, dass ich gute Werte vermitteln kann.
 125 I: Und welche Werte wären das zum Beispiel?
 126 B: Ja eben, sicher einmal, dass man den anderen so akzeptiert und
 127 gern hat, wie er ist....dann Vergebung. Also dass wenn man mal
 128 etwas gewesen ist, dass man versucht sich zu vergeben. Das habe
 129 ich auch schon so den Schülern gesagt, dass das etwas ganz
 130 Wichtiges ist im Leben....ja einfach Nächstenliebe, also Liebe
 131 untereinander. Also das ist jetzt auch nicht etwas mega
 132 christliches in dem Sinne, aber das, was mir wichtig ist in dem
 133 Sinne.

Spir. = Sinn

Spir. coping
Sicht der Kinder

Sicht der Kinder

Spir. = Sinn

Spir. = Werte

findet Definition schwierig

ganz klar
Spir. = Beziehung
Sinn
Hinterfragen
scheint wichtig

Ändert Meinung
später

schon wieder!

Vertrauen
erlebnisbasiert
neue Sichtweise
Dungang mit Stress

Kinder Gottes
wert

Sinnstiftung

Spir. = Wertvermittlung

Wert
Wert

Wert

Appendix V – Example Chronological List of Emergent Themes

This table is the result of the first part of stage three of the analysis process: A chronological list of emergent themes. The data come from Beatrice's interview. The number indicates the page on which the theme appears in the transcript. The emergent themes have initially been in the left-hand margin of the transcript in German and have been translated in this table.

- 1 Defining spirituality is difficult
- 1 Awareness of higher power
- 1 Connection to higher power
- 1 Spirituality is important
- 1 Seeking spirituality
- 1 Spirituality provides security
- 1 Felt connection to God
- 1 Experiencing spirituality through music
- 1 Letting go of problems
- 1 Open to the speaking of God
- 1 Getting away from everyday problems
- 1 Receiving a new focus

- 2 Rituals are important
- 2 Connection to God through relationships
- 2 Religiosity seen as negative
- 2 Not religious, but woman of faith
- 2 Religiosity is rigid

- 3 Spirituality provides meaning
- 3 Connection to God provides meaning
- 3 Spirituality influences view on students
- 3 See child as a child of God
- 3 Teach good values
- 3 Value of acceptance

- 3 Value of forgiveness
- 3 Value of brotherly love

- 4 Spirituality influences teacher identity
- 4 Direct and indirect influences on identity
- 4 Sensing God in class
- 4 Important spiritual experience in class
- 4 Emotional impact of spiritual experience
- 4 Music as a spiritual influence

- 5 Spirituality as coping strategy
- 5 Brotherly love in class
- 5 Spirituality is beneficial for students
- 5 Spiritual rituals during holiday season
- 5 Value of appreciation

- 6 Prayer as coping strategy
- 6 Importance of prayer
- 6 Holding back
- 6 Spirituality not allowed
- 6 Spirituality only subliminal
- 6 No pressure
- 6 Very careful about spirituality

- 7 No negative reactions
- 7 Very careful about spirituality
- 7 Tensions as a teacher
- 7 Spirituality important for students

- 8 Important spiritual experience in class

- 9 Room for spirituality in class
- 9 Being open about spirituality amongst teachers

- 10 Holiday seasons used for spirituality
- 10 Spirituality not a topic amongst teachers
- 10 No claim to truth
- 10 Importance of dialogue

- 11 Spirituality influenced career choice
- 11 Lead by divine impressions
- 11 Spirituality continually present
- 11 Spirituality works automatically
- 11 Spirituality transpires
- 11 Words only sometimes necessary

- 12 Presence is important
- 12 Holy Spirit works through me
- 12 Message in an unseen world
- 12 Tension about communicating
- 12 Personal spirituality not a problem
- 12 Spirituality important for students

- 13 Interview influences awareness

Appendix VI - Example of Emergent Themes Clustered Into Superordinate Themes

This table is the result of the second part of stage three of the analysis process. The data come from Beatrices's interview. Again, all the themes and quotes have been translated from German into English. The line number always indicates the starting point of the quote in the transcript.

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Line</i>	<i>Excerpts from Transcript</i>
Spirituality is central in the teacher's life		
1 Spirituality is important	31	Spirituality is actually quite important to me
1 Seeking spirituality	34	I seek the spiritual very much
2 Rituals are important	67	Spiritual rituals...yes, that is definitely important to me
Spirituality as a connection to the unseen / a higher power		
1 Awareness of higher power	22	Spirituality...to me it's the awareness of a higher power
1 Connection to higher power	24	Seeking the connection to higher powers
1 Felt connection to God	32	To have the feeling that there is something more, not just the earthly, the physical
2 Connection to God through relationships	47	In talking to friends about such topics, I feel that connection to God happens
12 Message in an unseen world	499	Speaking positive things over a child...that is a message in an unseen world
Spirituality is different from religiosity		
1 Defining spirituality is difficult	20	Defining spirituality...is not that easy for me
1 Experiencing spirituality through music	37	Through music mainly. That is my primary access to spirituality
2 Religiosity seen as negative	57	Religiosity to me is something that has negative connotations
2 Not religious, but having faith	60	I would describe myself as having faith
2 Religiosity is rigid	73	To me, religiosity is something rigid
4 Music as a spiritual influence	174	The music created room for the spiritual
Spirituality shapes general identity		
3 Spirituality provides meaning	94	Of course it provides meaning for my life
3 Connection to God provides meaning	122	We are children of God...that does provide meaning for my life
Influence of spirituality on career choice		
11 Spirituality influenced career choice	454	I have realized that my spirituality has influenced my career choice...the love it provides for me to work with teenagers
Influence of spirituality on teacher identity		

4 Spirituality influences teacher identity	136	It influences my identity, so it also influences my teacher identity
4 Direct and indirect influences on identity	138	I am sure it influences my teacher identity, be it consciously or unconsciously
Influence of spirituality on pedagogical views		
1 Receiving a new focus	44	It helps me to be less self-centered, to approach things with a new focus
3 Influences view on students	114	When things are difficult, it helps me to see the beautiful in the situation
3 See child as a child of God	119	It helps me when I'm upset, to see the children as children of God
5 Spirituality is beneficial for students	199	Spirituality is something that is good for students even if they sometimes don't understand why
7 Spirituality important for students	296	I mean, a child needs to experience this somewhere
12 Spirituality important for students	522	I realize that it is a big topic for them
Spirituality as a resource against stress		
1 Spirituality provides security	31	It gives me a secure foundation for my life
1 Letting go of problems	40	I can let go of problems because I am in a different sphere
1 Getting away from everyday problems	43	Spirituality helps me to get away from everyday life in that moment
3 Spirituality helpful in difficult situations	109	I try, when I am in a difficult situation, to give it all to God
5 Spirituality as coping strategy	179	I know where I can go when I am stressed, with my thoughts...that I am in good hands
6 Prayer as coping strategy	228	It was super stressful for me, and then I prayed
Key spiritual experience in the classroom		
4 Sensing God in class	144	There are moments where I feel God in class, in the children
4 Important spiritual experience in class	162	The room was full of the spirit, I almost started to cry, it was crazy
4 Emotional impact of spiritual experience	168	She started to cry, it was crazy
8 Important spiritual experience in class	319	And he somehow totally saw God's view. I believe it was a very cool experience for him
Spirituality works automatically		
5 Brotherly love in class	198	The atmosphere is nice. It exudes a certain love for one another
11 Spirituality continually present	478	I believe it is often more in the background present
11 Spirituality works automatically	482	I believe it does, it does somehow work automatically

11 Spirituality transpires	484	Just through my being I believe that spirituality comes across
11 Words only sometimes necessary	489	Sometimes it does not need any words
12 Presence is important	495	It is good to just be present
12 Holy Spirit works through me	493	When you are simply present...I believe the spirit can work through me
Teaching spirituality indirectly through values		
3 Teach good values	124	It is often also about teaching good values
3 Value of acceptance	126	Well yes, that we accept one another
3 Value of forgiveness	128	That when something happened, that we forgive one another
3 Value of brotherly love	130	Just brotherly love, meaning love amongst each other
5 Value of appreciation	217	Appreciation, that is a very important value
10 Importance of dialogue	427	Dialogue is more important than any claim to truth
Holidays as anchor for spiritual topics		
5 Spiritual rituals during holiday season	201	I do this consciously always before Christmas
10 Holiday seasons used for spirituality	403	Read a text or sing a song, really just look at that precisely before Christmas
Importance of prayer		
6 Importance of prayer	230	And then I prayed for [the students] almost the entire weekend
6 Prayer as coping strategy	238	I realize that when there are difficult situations, I do it more often
Being led by a higher power		
1 Open to the speaking of God	41	Then my spirit is very open to the speaking of God
11 Lead by divine impressions	473	Then I can feel how God shows me things and can react to them
Deliberate restraint		
6 Holding back	247	I sometimes had the feeling that I was not allowed to
6 Spirituality only subliminal	250	Concrete acts, I only do them subliminally
6 Very careful about spirituality	257	I am just very careful
7 Very careful about spirituality	278	That's why I'm so careful
10 No claim to truth	435	I have a hard time with people who claim their [spiritual] truths
Spirituality not a topic amongst staff		
7 No negative reactions	271	I have not received any direct negative reactions
10 Spirituality not a topic	414	There was nothing...I mean that it ever was

amongst teachers		a topic
Inner tensions		
6 Spirituality not allowed	247	I sometimes had the feeling that I was not allowed to
6 No pressure	246	Not really pressure, no
6 Very careful about spirituality	257	I am just very careful
7 Very careful about spirituality	278	That's why I'm so careful
7 Tensions as a teacher	279	Of course, I am convinced that it is good for students, but I don't want them to go home and...
9 Room for spirituality in class	357	I believe that I could give room for spirituality in class
9 Being open about spirituality amongst teachers	395	I believe there can be really interesting conversations about spirituality
12 Personal spirituality not a problem	513	My personal spirituality is not a problem
12 Tension about communicating	519	It is more about: What statements am I allowed to make?
Interview influences awareness		
13 Interview influences awareness	538	It was on my mind the first few days after the interview

Appendix VII - Example of a Subordinate Theme Across All Cases

This table shows all the mentions of the subordinate theme “deliberate restraint”, which came up a total of 21 time in the twelve interviews. Because generally only one excerpt per theme and participants could be portrayed in the results section, the table shows the depth and richness of the data collected.

Subordinate theme: <i>Deliberate restraint</i>		
Elena	To know in this moment: I have to keep it to myself	195
Elena	I realized: I can't do this. Otherwise I would abuse my position of power and indoctrinate them, because they are dependent on me.	211
Beatrice	I had felt that I was not allowed.	238
Beatrice	Concrete acts, I only do them subliminally.	250
Matt	It's important to me that I'm not trying to influence too much.	124
Matt	I wouldn't pray for students directly in class.	194
Matt	I'm not telling [the students] that I'm part of a church.	224
Dean	I would never say 'I pray in the morning' or 'I am praying for you'.	286
Dean	That would happen only once [praying with a student]. They would stop that at once. I would be attacked. They would say I am a religious fanatic and I am trying to influence the kids.	324
Luke	I only teach Christian songs that are in the official course book. That's the boundary for me.	274
Luke	I am hesitant when there are situations where they <i>have</i> to do something.	299
Luke	I don't tell my student that I believe in God.	309
Luke	Yes, sometimes there is deliberate restraint.	444
Rolf	You make yourself vulnerable.	198
Rolf	I don't want to be too exposed.	203
Rolf	You might be put into the 'Christian-fundamentalist' corner.	210
Rolf	When you are too open, then you will be quickly [attacked].	219
Rolf	When you come on too strongly, that can also be seen as threatening.	271
Rolf	I am careful not to say too much...I don't want to alienate anybody.	347
Rolf	I often say 'I'm thinking of you' and not 'I'm praying for you'.	362

Appendix VIII – Master Table of Meta-Themes and Subordinate Themes

This table combines the themes of all six interviews grouped into meta-themes. It is the result of stage four of the analysis process. Most themes appear more than once in the individual interviews. Due to word constraint, in this table only one instant per participant is listed. The table also shows that a few themes are not present in all the interviews.

Participant	Example quote	Line
SPIRITUALITY'S KEY ROLE IN TEACHERS' LIVES		
Spirituality is central in the teacher's life		
Elena	The importance of spirituality in my life is high, yes, very high.	73
Beatrice	I seek the spiritual very much.	34
Matt	Spirituality is important in my life in questions about purpose, about my place, about finding contentment.	44
Dean	When you are a believer, it is central, absolutely central.	33
Luke	It means to me inner quietness, peace, clarity, direction, yes, fulfillment, a good life, consolation.	19
Rolf	Spirituality is very important for me. I believe my life would look completely different without it.	83
Spirituality as a connection to the unseen / to a higher power		
Elena	I would describe spirituality as the knowledge that there is something higher that has more control than I do and that sees more.	45
Beatrice	Spirituality...to me it's the awareness of a higher power.	22
Matt	That you don't just cling to what is or what you see, but also believe that there is more than what you just see or experience.	33
Dean	Spirituality is about staying connected with God.	28
Luke	Spirituality has much to do with perceiving more than the seen and with a different reality.	12
Rolf	I believe that while we have this visible world, there is this large invisible world where the strings are pulled.	102
Spirituality is different from religiosity		
Elena	Religiosity is more something that one does because one does it. It has to do with rituals and traditions. Spirituality must be experienced in everyday life, otherwise it makes no sense.	54
Beatrice	Religiosity to me is something that has negative connotations.	57
Matt	I used to see religiosity as something negative. But I have come to see that people understand more quickly when I say 'I am religious'.	62
Dean	Religiosity is more theoretical, and rituals...Spirituality is living it out personally.	58

Luke	Religiosity has much to do with prescribed forms and dogma...spirituality grows, changes, is not static.	35
Rolf	Religiosity...is like following a cooking recipe....Spirituality is more on a relational level.	41
SPIRITUALITY's IMPACT ON TEACHER IDENTITY		
Spirituality shapes general identity		
Elena	When I do it with a spiritual perspective, it is more valuable, even if it is only baking a cake, let's say, or baking bread. An extended purpose that continues on.	468
Beatrice	We are children of God...that does provide meaning for my life.	122
Matt	The knowledge that there is a God who has created me and likes me the way I am.	68
Dean	The purpose lays in the lasting mark I leave behind, it's about serving others.	113
Luke	Meaning is provided by God, in a nutshell.	51
Rolf	My faith provides meaning.	114
Influence of spirituality on career choice		
Elena	It probably had an influence, not consciously but unconsciously.	84
Beatrice	I have realized that my spirituality has influenced my career choice...the love it provides for me to work with teenagers.	454
Matt	God has led me into a field where I have a purposeful task and where I can make a difference.	71
Dean	(n/a)	
Luke	God has given me certain gifts. Because of these, I made a decision for my profession.	56
Rolf	I believe that there was someone who has pulled the strings for me in the background.	143
Influence of spirituality on teacher identity		
Elena	First of all, there is this self-conception: I am in the right place, God has placed me here.	110
Beatrice	I am sure it influences my teacher identity, because it influences my identity, be it consciously or unconsciously.	138
Matt	It is hard to say, but I believe in certain situations, my spirituality shapes who I am as a teacher... when I try to shift focus.	99
Dean	It has helped me to develop a greater sensitivity as a teacher.	166
Luke	I have good self-confidence. I do ascribe that to my spirituality. I don't define myself through my job.	85
Rolf	(n/a)	
Influence of spirituality on pedagogical views		
Elena	It is a Godly thought, that they discover: This is who I am and this is what is part of me.	103
Beatrice	It helps me when I'm upset, to see the children as children of God.	119
Matt	Appreciation for each child, and for all the same. I feel that God has that, too, and yes, I find it important that each child is loved	93

	and supported.	
Dean	I have become much more understanding because God has given me such a daughter.	164
Luke	It influences my views in an extreme way.... I just love people.	66
Rolf	(n/a)	
Spirituality as a resource against stress		
Elena	I know God is behind me and I can come to Him when I need help or wisdom or anything.	112
Beatrice	It gives me a secure foundation for my life.	31
Matt	When I am stressed, it helps to know 'yes, I am in the right place'.	107
Dean	God never gives you more than you can handle...I trust that this is true.	250
Luke	In regard to stress, I realize how it brings a sense of calm.	102
Rolf	It is at times an extreme relief. Also, a place to offload and to recharge.	231
INDIRECT SPIRITUALITY IN THE CLASSROOM		
Key spiritual experience in the classroom		
Elena	I once journeyed with this youth. She had a very difficult time and I carried her very much in prayer. And it was an awesome experience to see how...we experienced a breakthrough.	256
Beatrice	The room was full of the spirit, I almost started to cry, it was crazy.	162
Matt	Everything came from the students. I found that super cool, all the points they brought in.	283
Dean	Sometimes there are these pearls of lessons that I have not even planned like that.	583
Luke	To give it room and not make class or school the first priority...I could totally encourage her.	142
Rolf	And there were some who could not hold back their tears.	191
Spirituality works automatically		
Elena	First of all, it has to do with your aura. In a sense of: God is in the midst. He is in me.	482
Beatrice	Just through my being I believe that spirituality comes across.	484
Matt	Again and again students come to me and ask: Do you believe in God? It's about what I exude.	301
Dean	And I hope that God shapes me in a way or gives me a spirit that has a positive influence on the children.	271
Luke	I believe that there is something godly in me...and what I do or say, one could possibly call that automatic spiritual aura.	402
Rolf	We should just be light, we should be salt.	247
Teaching spirituality indirectly through values		
Elena	There are all these spiritual values that I've tried to teach...honesty, empathy, forgiveness, reconciliation.	115
Beatrice	It is often also about teaching good values.	124

Matt	I have my spiritual values, and it's ok to teach them in my view.	207
Dean	This important word: respect. I respect it and I demand respect.	392
Luke	My goal is to show them appreciation.	223
Rolf	I try to portray a great deal of appreciation and thankfulness.	444
Holidays as anchor for spiritual topics		
Elena	I always found it great when there was a [Christian] holiday. I always made [spirituality] a topic then.	241
Beatrice	I do this consciously always before Christmas.	201
Matt	(n/a)	
Dean	And I wrote down where it fits best: Christmas, Palm Sunday, Good Friday, Easter...	273
Luke	There is a lot of music with spiritual content: the Christmas Oratoria for Christmas, the Passion for Easter...	172
Rolf	(n/a)	
Importance of prayer		
Elena	I didn't say it directly, but I carried her very much in prayer.	247
Beatrice	And then I prayed for [the students] almost the entire weekend.	230
Matt	I definitely pray for students at home, by myself.	186
Dean	I pray much for these kids and for the school.	55
Luke	I pray again and again for them during class.	240
Rolf	'Look, I have 5 minutes, and I will go pray for you'.	303
Being led by a higher power		
Elena	When I reach my limits, I am dependent on receiving wisdom. Higher wisdom than what I already know.	79
Beatrice	Then I can feel how God shows me things and can react to them.	473
Matt	In certain situations, I try to switch focus and reflect or ask God: What do you want in this situation? What do you want for this child? What should I do?	99
Dean	And maybe I am given a thought by the Holy Spirit.	40
Luke	At times I have completely changed the lesson because I had the impression that that was what I was supposed to do in that moment.	252
Rolf	I am very grateful for protection and for direction.	108
TENSIONS BETWEEN SPIRITUALITY AND TEACHING		
Deliberate restraint		
Elena	I realized: I can't do this. Otherwise I would abuse my position of power and indoctrinate them, because they are dependent on me.	211
Beatrice	Concrete acts, I only do them subliminally.	250
Matt	I wouldn't pray for students directly in class.	194
Dean	I would never say 'I pray in the morning' or 'I am praying for you'.	286
Luke	I am hesitant when there are situations where they <i>have</i> to do something.	299
Rolf	You make yourself vulnerable.	198

Spirituality not a topic amongst staff		
Elena	We did not talk about it.	395
Beatrice	There was nothing...I mean that it ever was a topic.	414
Matt	A topic amongst colleagues?...very little.	215
Dean	I am never asked about it.	364
Luke	Spirituality in class is somewhat of a taboo topic.	331
Rolf	I hold back and stay in the background when there are discussions among the staff.	376
Inner tensions		
Elena	Sometimes I thought: Now I should pray with them...and then I felt this tension.	207
Beatrice	Of course I am convinced that it is good for students, but I don't want them to go home and...	279
Matt	(n/a)	
Dean	It would only happen once that I pray for students and I would be attacked.	324
Luke	There is a longing to be able to formulate it and pass it on and make it practical.	256
Rolf	You look that you are not too clear about it...Otherwise one goes home and tells it to Mom and Dad and then you have a problem...Of course I wish I would be able to do more.	210
Interview influences awareness		
Elena	The interview has helped me to reflect on and become aware of what is important to me.	547
Beatrice	It was on my mind the first few days after the interview.	538
Matt	It helped me to reflect and I was positively surprised to realize: I do it well and it is present and that is ok.	328
Dean	(n/a)	
Luke	The interview helped me to perceive the breadth of possibilities and also to see it as a win for the students and for myself.	486
Rolf	(n/a)	