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Nurturing Young Children's Spirituality in Early Years Practice in England

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Abstract

This thesis is focused on nurturing young children's spirituality in early childhood education practice and policy in England. It explores what spirituality means to six practitioners and four parents of children within the context of early childhood education provision for children from birth to five years, where practice is underpinned by the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage. Promoting spiritual development in early years practice is not explicit in this national policy framework or its macro-level practice guidance. In contrast to the National Curriculum, where promoting pupils' spiritual development alongside moral, cultural, mental and physical development is explicit and is enshrined in legislation. Through a genealogical lens, the historical and contemporary policy position of promoting young children's spiritual development in the educational and care context is traced and compared.

Designed in a qualitative approach, artefacts belonging to the participants linked to their understanding of spirituality, provide a bridging tool to commence the spiritual dialogue in semi-structured interviews to define spirituality and to explore how the young child's spirit is perceived to be nurtured in early childhood. The dialogue illustrates spiritually focused practice recorded in diaries by the practitioners and parent reflections on children's experiences in early years settings and other environments. Leading to the identification of spiritually nurturing environments and barriers with the potential to hinder spirituality.

The findings of the study suggest within the national early childhood education policy promoting spiritual development in early years practice is implicit and permeates through the statutory framework. Yet, education policy for spirituality is convoluted in the early childhood context in England, where promoting spiritual development in schools is legislated, which differs from provision in the private, voluntary and independent sector.

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Table of Contents

	Abstract	1
	Acknowledgements	2
Chapter 1	Introduction	
1.1	Chapter outline	8
1.2	Defining the spirit	8
1.3	The area of research – young children’s spirituality in the Early Years Foundation Stage	11
1.4	Designing and redesigning the research	13
1.5	A brief introduction to the 2014 EYFS - mandatory in early years provision during the data collection period of the research	13
1.6	Clarification of terminology	15
1.7	The theoretical framework and research approach	16
1.8	Spiritual awakening – the teaching pathway underpinning positionality	18
1.9	The research questions	19
1.10	The structure of the thesis	20
Chapter 2	Literature Review	
2.1	Introduction	21
2.2	The roots of early childhood education, the embedding of the promotion of children’s spiritual development by pioneers of early childhood education	22
2.3	Defining spirituality and spiritual development	26
2.4	Spirituality and the young child	32
2.5	Spirituality in the early childhood curriculum: Te Whāriki of New Zealand	37
2.6	Policy concerns in England – the erosion of promoting spiritual development in early childhood education	42
2.7	Spirituality, bereavement and afterlife	44
2.8	Gaps in knowledge	48
Chapter 3	Methodology and Methods	
3.1	Introduction	50
3.2	The research design	51
3.3	The research questions	53

3.4	Negotiating access	54
3.5	The research participants	57
3.6	Pilot studies	59
3.7	The planning of the interviews	60
3.8	The purpose of the artefacts	62
3.9	Diaries recorded by practitioner participants	63
3.10	Research journal and field notes	64
3.11	Transcription of audio recorded interviews	65
3.12	Confidentiality and anonymity	66
3.13	Strategies engaged to analyse policy	68
3.14	The data analysis framework	69
Chapter 4	Documentary and Policy Analysis	
4.1	Introduction	71
4.2	An outline of the analysis framework	71
4.3	The genealogical lens – searching for the spiritual thread	73
4.4	The child at the heart of policy and practice	76
4.5	Young children’s spiritual development focused in the curriculum	77
4.6	Promoting spiritual development in the Foundation Stage	79
4.7	The policy shift splitting the early childhood education spiritual discourse	83
4.8	Increasing the spotlight on SMSC development through British values	85
4.9	The spiritual policy thread across the early childhood education and care frameworks of the United Kingdom	86
4.10	Summary of documentary and policy analysis findings	87
Chapter 5	Findings	
5.1	The chapter outline to present the findings	89
5.2	Participant selected artefacts supporting the definition of spirituality	90
5.3	How do practitioners and parents of young children define spirituality?	93
5.4	Locating the promotion of spiritual development in the EYFS	96
5.5	What does provision for promoting spiritual development look like in everyday practice?	99
5.6	Potential barriers to spiritual development	109

5.7	Spiritually sensitive moments identified in early years practice	112
5.8	To what extent does the promotion of young children's spiritual development exist in early education and childcare qualification training?	114
5.9	What is the relevance of promoting spiritual development in contemporary early years practice in England?	116
5.10	Chapter conclusion	118
Chapter 6	Discussion	
6.1	Introduction	120
6.2	Searching for spiritual understanding in the Early Years Foundation Stage Framework	121
6.3	Interpreting policy – transforming the implicit to explicit in practice	122
6.4	Expressing the meaning of spirituality - evaluating the role of the artefacts in the study	124
6.5	Defining spirituality	126
6.6	Hearing young children's spiritual voices in spiritually nurturing environments	131
6.7	Looking up to the sky - a spiritually nurturing resource	133
6.8	Nurturing young children's spirituality – the role of play and using all the senses	135
6.9	Potential spiritual barriers	136
6.10	Sensitive conversations and spiritual dilemmas	140
6.11	The spiritual rift - policy differences hindering a universal approach to spiritual development in early childhood education	142
6.12	Early years workforce training and qualifications – finding space for promoting children's spiritual rights	146
6.13	Reflecting on the research methods	148
6.14	Conclusion of chapter	150
Chapter 7	Conclusion	
7.1	Chapter outline	152
7.2	Spirituality matters in early childhood education	153
7.3	Implications of the research	154
7.4	The convoluted spiritual policy landscape	155
7.5	My contribution to the spirituality and early childhood education discourse	157
7.6	Recommendations for future research	158

	List of Tables and Figures	
Table 2.1	A sample of definitions of spirituality and spiritual development	27
Table 3.1	The time frame of the research from seeking ethical approval to completion of the fieldwork	56
Table 4.1	The policy analysis framework adapted from Rizvi and Lingard's (2010) questions for analysis	73
Table 4.2	Directly quoted from the Education Act 2002 – locating the promotion of young children's spiritual development in legislation	81
Figure 1.1	Watson's (2017) key spirituality interrelated values	17
Figure 3.2	An outline of the research design - demonstrating the procedures	60
Figure 5.1	Nurturing spirituality – activities and experiences identified by the participants as promoting young children's spiritual development	104
Figure 6.1	What spirituality means – constructed from the participants' descriptions and definitions presented in Chapter 5	131
	References	160
	Appendices	
Appendix 1	Confirmation letter of ethical approval - 1	178
Appendix 2	Confirmation letter of ethical approval - 2	179
Appendix 3	The connection of the research objectives to the research methods	180
Appendix 4	Mapping of the research questions to the practitioner interview field questions	181
Appendix 5	Mapping of the parent interview questions to the research questions	183
Appendix 6	Participant Information Sheet - for practitioners	184
Appendix 7	Participant Information Sheet - for parents	186
Appendix 8	Consent Form - for practitioners	188
Appendix 9	Consent Form - for parents	189
Appendix 10	Data analysis mapping	190

Abbreviations	
BERA	British Educational Research Association
DCSF	Department for Children, Schools and Families
DfE	Department for Education
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
DES	Department of Education and Science
ECE	Early Childhood Education
ECEC	Early Childhood Education and Care
EYFS	Early Years Foundation Stage
Ofsted	The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills
PSED	Personal, Social and Emotional Development
PVI	Private, Voluntary and Independent
QCA	Qualifications and Curriculum Authority
SCAA	School Curriculum and Assessment Authority
SMSC	Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural
RE	Religious Education
UK	United Kingdom

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Chapter outline

This thesis focuses on young children's spirituality from birth to five years, in the context of the early childhood education (ECE) policy and practice interface of England. Kimes-Myers (1997) describes the spiritual dimension of development as "an integral component of every child's life" (p.xi). Children's spirituality according to Reynaert (2014, p.179) "...is seen as the capacity children initially possess to search for meaning in their lives". Paradoxically, very few studies attentive to young children's spirituality have been conducted nationally and internationally (Adams et al., 2016; Goodliff, 2016; 2013).

To introduce the area of study, the first part of the chapter illustrates published definitions of the 'spirit', followed by the rationale and outline of the research, as well as a brief introduction to the 2014 Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) (DfE, 2014a) in situ during the research data collection. Next, the terminology frequently used in this thesis originating from the EYFS (DfE, 2014a; DCSF, 2008a) and the Childcare Act 2006 (HMSO, 2006) is clarified. Followed by a brief summary, in the context of "positionality" (Wellington, 2015, p.87), I reflect on the teaching pathway that underpins my interest in young children's spirituality in education.

According to Bassey (1999) "A research question is the engine which drives the train of enquiry" (p.67), in this study one primary question leads the enquiry alongside four secondary questions. These are introduced next in this chapter and the relationship of these research questions to the field questions will be explained in Chapter 3. In the final section of this introductory chapter the structure of the thesis is outlined.

1.2 Defining the spirit

Nurturing spirituality is advocated in studies focused on the spiritual dimension of human development in childhood, for example, Mata-McMahon et al. (2018), Schein (2014) and Goodliff (2013). Before analysing how this aspect of

development is perceived to be nurtured, a starting point is to consider the meaning of 'spirit' in the human context and to introduce some of the complexities surrounding this area of study. This is important because, as Gardner (1999) suggests, the spirit is less recognised by many people than the body and mind. Yet, reference to the spirit is transparent in a range of literature, for example, Locke proposed in 1690 "...we have as much reason to be satisfied with our notion of immaterial spirit, as with our notion of body; and the existence of the one, as well as the other" (Locke, 1997, p.284). Many meanings of the word 'spirit' are proposed by Jung (2003), one example is "...the principle that stands in opposition to matter" (p.102). Whereas, Sheldrake (2010) notes it is the opposite of "...flesh...in the sense of everything contrary to the Spirit of God" (p.6).

In the educational domain, the meaning of 'spirit' in guidance defining spiritual development published by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted, 2004a) refers to the "non-material element of a human being which animates and sustains us" (p.12). Priestley (1997) also discusses the spirit in the educational context and maintains "We all have a spirit...'spirit' merely denotes 'life'" (p.29). In contrast, spirit, however is frequently used by the media in a wider context, for example 'the spirit of the game' relating to sport. In a shortened form, spirituality, spiritual and soul have also been referred to as "'S' words" (Kimes-Myers, 1997, p.43). Subsequently, in this thesis, words beginning with 'S' transform into keywords: spirit, spiritual, spirituality and soul, as I argue receptiveness to spiritual language in policy offers the potential for these concepts to be seen and interpreted, and provokes questioning of meaning.

The meaning of spirituality to an individual is underpinned by beliefs (Sokanovic and Muller, 1999). For example, Nye (2009) raises awareness to the familiarity of spiritual vocabulary to Christians due to the frequency of words such as 'spirit' within prayers and responses, which include "God's Spirit and our own spirit" (p.4). Returning to Ofsted's (2004a) constructed spiritual development definition, this appears to be purposely composed to encompass different views of what is aimed to be developed, namely "...a pupil's 'spirit'...a pupil's

'soul'... 'personality' or 'character'" (p. 12). This broad education contextualised definition represents an attempt to define spiritual development inclusively, for those with or without a faith, and for many faiths. Previously, in 1994, Ofsted's definition emphasised the legislative focus that spiritual development can be promoted across the whole curriculum specifying that "'Spiritual' is not synonymous with 'religious'" (Ofsted, 2004a, p.8). Indeed, some people choose to describe themselves as "spiritual but not religious" (Nye, 2009, p.4). Rankin (2008) proposes that people "...feel that they are spiritual beings, whether or not they follow any particular religion" (p.xiii). Hence, a wealth of proposed religious and secular definitions associated with spirituality and spiritual development are cited in published literature, generated from the search for an agreed universal definition. Thatcher (1992) argues that "...there are as many definitions of spirituality as there are writers" (p.2), a continuing tendency as working definitions of spirituality are constructed, and researchers demonstrate their epistemological and ontological viewpoints.

When discussing transformative change in early childhood education, Moss (2014) proposes "Language matters. We should pick our words carefully, being self-conscious about meaning" (p.76). In the spiritual research discourse, this is applicable, because spirituality and spiritual development are both described as elusive (Adams et al., 2016; Goodliff, 2013; Eaude, 2005). Legislation tends to attach spiritual to development, for example the Education Act 2002 (HMSO, 2002). By contrast, researchers and authors use a range of spiritual terminology, for example spirituality (Goodliff, 2016; 2013; Kimes Myers, 1997), spiritual growth (Priestley, 2000; Sokanovic and Muller, 1999), the spiritual dimension (Adams et al., 2008) and spiritual experience (Eaude, 2003).

Clearly a research topic such as spirituality, underpinned by beliefs, with differences of opinion of what it is, with no universally agreed definition, needs to be approached with sensitivity (Nutbrown, 2018; University of Sheffield School of Education, 2016). Some of the issues that have troubled defining spirituality will be discussed further in Chapter 2, where a range of published definitions are presented in the reviewed literature. In the next section of this

chapter, the area of research is introduced to explain the rationale underpinning the study.

1.3 The area of research – young children’s spirituality in the Early Years Foundation Stage

The research maintains a focus on young children’s spirituality, within the parameters of early childhood education (ECE) in England in the context of the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) (DfE, 2017a; 2014a) and the overarching legislation of the Childcare Act 2006 (HMSO, 2006). Roberts-Holmes (2015) argues the 2008 EYFS (DCSF, 2008a) emerged within a “...neo-liberal ‘raising standards’ policy context” (p.303). The EYFS was a landmark policy because it specifically focused on the national education and care standards for children from birth to five years. One national policy sets the ECE framework to be interpreted by practitioners in the maintained sector, which includes the Reception year in primary schools, and the early years provision within the private, voluntary and independent (PVI) sector (Roberts-Holmes, 2012).

Thereby, the EYFS statutory framework became mandatory in September 2008 (DCSF, 2008a) and after a period of embedding into practice became the focus of an independent review led by Dame Clare Tickell (DfE, 2011), resulting in a revised, slimmed-down, EYFS statutory framework that was introduced in September 2012 (DfE, 2012). Tickell (DfE, 2011) clarified in her response to the Minister of State for Children and Families that “Much of the resource initially provided to support the implementation and development of the EYFS is being phased out” (p.4). The 2008 non-statutory EYFS practice guidance clearly informed practitioners to plan activities to promote spiritual development (DCSF, 2008b), although this differed from the statutory document that contained no references to spiritual development (DCSF, 2008a). Whereas, spiritual development was linked to the “A Unique Child” (DCSF, 2008c, p.1.1) theme within the child development definition in the Principles into Practice resources.

Predominantly, the EYFS framework constructs the child as unique in its guiding principles, suggesting "...every child is a unique child, who is constantly learning and can be capable, confident and self-assured" (DfE, 2014a, p.6). However, a fundamental change to macro-level non-statutory practice guidance supporting the implementation of the 2012 statutory EYFS framework phased out all explicit spiritual references (Early Education, 2012) and the absence of reference to spiritual development in the statutory framework continued (DfE, 2012). Subsequently, the lack of recognising the spiritual dimension of childhood in ECE policy since 2012 is already noted in literature by Goodliff (2016; 2013), Dowling (2014) and McVittie (2013). It is unclear why reference to the spiritual dimension is shrouded in this policy, especially as McVittie's (2013) analysis of the 2012 EYFS statutory framework (DfE, 2012) applying Nye and Hay's "categories of spiritual sensitivities" (1996, p.10) found the promotion of spiritual development inherently evident. However, the 2014 and 2017 updated versions of the EYFS statutory framework also exclude overt reference to the spiritual (DfE, 2017a; 2014a) and the non-statutory guidance is unchanged (Early Education, 2012).

In contrast the requirement to promote pupils' spiritual development is overt in the statutory National Curriculum (DfE, 2013a; HMSO, 2002) for maintained schools. A range of Education Acts enshrined the requirement to promote this aspect of development in legislation, however, this study predominantly focuses on the 2002 Education Act (HMSO, 2002). Primarily, it is a legal requirement to promote the spiritual development of pupils in schools in England and Wales (Adams et al., 2015). School inspections incorporate a judgement of how well the school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development (Adams, 2009) and the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted, 2017; 2015a) provide information of how these aspects of development are demonstrated.

As research is comprised of layers of questioning, provocatively the question "So what?" (Hunt, 2006, p.328) could be applied at this point in response to the inconsistency of spiritual policy suggested between the EYFS statutory framework (DfE, 2014a) and the primary National Curriculum (DfE, 2013a). Fundamentally, two key factors are integral to this study. First, young

children's rights to spiritual development (Sagberg, 2017; Watson, 2017; UNICEF, 1989) and second, limitations entrenched in education policy. Therefore, the research focuses on young children's spirituality, specifically questioning how this is perceived in early years practice and historically in early childhood education policy.

1.4 Designing and redesigning the research

One point to clarify is, that within the United Kingdom (UK) the EYFS statutory framework is only mandatory in England as Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales each have different early childhood education and care (ECEC) policies (Wood, 2013). According to Oberski (2011) what spirituality means to a person is empirically researchable, indeed, this is demonstrated in past studies referenced in the reviewed literature in Chapter 2. Equipped with awareness of national policy differences in the UK that are presented in Chapter 4, I originally planned the research to explore the meaning of spirituality to eight practitioners in early years practice in the UK (Appendix 1). Difficulties in recruiting participants beyond England signalled the need to redesign the study (Appendix 2).

Therefore, this thesis reports what spirituality means in contemporary early years practice, to six practitioners caring for children working in six different settings situated in South East England, and four parents who accessed early years provision for their children. This is reported alongside an analysis of the political position of promoting young children's spiritual development in education in England. Further details of the changes to the research design, the methodology, ethical framework and research methods are reported in Chapter 3.

1.5 A brief introduction to the 2014 EYFS - mandatory in early years provision during the data collection period of the research

From September 2014, the EYFS framework applied to a diverse range of early years provision in "...maintained schools; non-maintained schools; independent schools; all providers on the Early Years register; and all providers registered with an early years childminder agency" (DfE, 2014a, p.4). Supporting

transition between the home and setting, a “key person” (DfE, 2014a, p.21) in an early years setting is assigned to manage individual needs and to build trusting relationships with the children and their parents. A frequent word in the EYFS policy discourse indicative of the necessity of a prescribed action is ‘must’. Primarily, the key person “...must seek to engage and support parents and/or carers in guiding their child’s development at home” (DfE, 2014a, p.10). Well-being and happiness in childhood is advocated in the policy framework, as well as the importance of positive relationships developing between the child, parents and the assigned practitioner who holds the key person role (DfE, 2014a), encapsulated in a “triangle of care” (Brooker, 2010, p.181). Contextualising the components of this triangle is the perception of the children as “direct recipients” (Moss, 2014, p.56) of early childhood education which includes care. Parents are identified as “consumers” (Moss, 2014, p.68) in government proposals, thus highlighting the need for choice, affordability and flexibility within childcare (DfE, 2013b).

Brooker (2010) raises awareness to the possibility of distress caused when viewpoints differ between parents and the practitioner. Overall, early childhood education providers are set the task of ensuring children are ready for school (Neaum, 2016), whilst working in partnership with parents. Although spiritual development is not explicit in the EYFS statutory framework (DfE, 2014a) the spiritual dimension of childhood might be an aspect of development parents may wish to discuss with practitioners in the early years setting. This factor extends the study to examine where children’s spirituality is positioned in early education and childcare qualifications and training to prepare practitioners to engage in spiritual development discussions with parents, should this arise in early years settings.

Rhetorical statements within the EYFS statutory framework can be associated with theoretical perspectives, and I draw attention here to “Every child deserves the best possible start in life and the support that enables them to fulfil their potential” (DfE, 2014a, p.5). Fulfilling potential, for example, reflects self-actualisation proposed within Maslow’s (1943) hierarchy of needs, incorporating the importance of meeting human basic needs “physiological, safety, love,

esteem” (p.394). Meeting the child’s needs and parent partnership resonates within the key person approach of the EYFS based on attachment theory principles (Elfer et al., 2012; Bowlby, 1969). Three characteristics of effective teaching and learning of the EYFS are described as “playing and exploring...active learning...creating and thinking critically” (DfE, 2014a, p.9), suggesting that pedagogy is underpinned by socio-cultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978) and guided participation (Rogoff, 2003). Whereas, practice guidance and summative assessments follow a Piagetian ages and stages approach. Ultimately this framework is outcomes driven and children aged five are individually assessed to establish if they meet predefined “early learning goals” (DfE, 2014a, p.10). Thus, the national policy framework endorses school readiness (Neaum, 2016; Roberts-Holmes, 2015; Bradbury, 2013).

In contrast, a recommendation of the Cambridge Primary Review (Alexander, 2010), an enquiry focusing on primary education in England that took place while the 2008 EYFS framework was statutory, recommended the EYFS “...should be renamed the foundation stage and extended to age six” (p.491). However, this recommendation was not enacted, nor was the recommendation that the compulsory schooling starting age should be debated (Alexander, 2010). Therefore, compulsory education in England continued to begin the term following the child’s fifth birthday, occurring for many children during the Reception year of primary school, which is also the final year of the EYFS (Roberts-Holmes, 2015; Bradbury, 2013). Further analysis of the EYFS is presented in Chapter 4 contextualised with the Childcare Act 2006 (HMSO, 2006). Therefore, in the next part of the chapter the terminology used in this thesis is clarified.

1.6 Clarification of terminology

Seeking meaning underpins this research, to avoid confusion it is essential to explain some of the commonly used terminology I use regarding early years practice in England. Alexander (2010) suggests the term ‘early years’ can apply to “...a phase of children’s development or a kind of provision” (p.159). In the Rumbold Report (DES, 1990) early years was defined as “...the 3 to 7/8 age range” (p.ii), which does not include children under three. As a result, I use the term ‘early years practice’ within the age boundaries of the EYFS of birth to

five years, which includes the Reception year in primary school (DfE, 2014a). Reference is made to the child/children/babies rather than pupils in the EYFS, although one reference to pupils appears in the statutory document to outline infant class size legislation (DfE, 2014a). Contextualised within the overarching legislation of the EYFS, I use the phrase 'young child' as defined in Chapter 21 of the Childcare Act 2006 "...during the period - (a) beginning with his birth, and (b) ending immediately before the 1st September next following the date on which he attains the age of five" (HMSO, 2006, p.11). As well, I use the word 'parent' as defined in the Childcare Act 2006 who "... (a) has parental responsibility for a young child or (b) has care of a young child" (HMSO, 2006, p.2), therefore, this includes carers. I refer to the six participants of the research working in the early years settings as 'practitioners', because this is the terminology used in the EYFS framework (DfE, 2014a). It is however a legal requirement in maintained nursery schools, maintained nursery classes and the Reception year of primary school, in the context of ratio and qualifications to include a "school teacher" (DfE, 2014a, p.23) as defined in the Education Act 2002 (HMSO, 2002). In the next section, the theoretical framework is presented.

1.7 The theoretical framework and research approach

To construct a theoretical framework to maintain the research focus on practice and policy, I have taken from Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological theory of human development the concept of a nested systems approach. The nested systems of the "...interdependence of the child, the family, the community and society" (Roberts, 2010, p.17) are integral within the EYFS framework (DfE, 2014a). Since the child is positioned as central or at the heart of practice, changes to macro-level national and international policy filtering from the "macrosystem" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p.26) have the capacity to impact the developing child and their family. An initial "textual analysis" (Fairclough, 2003, p.16) search of the EYFS statutory framework (DfE, 2014a) confirmed explicit reference to promote spiritual development is absent. Therefore, to examine the position of young children's spirituality in policy at a deeper level, an "archaeology" (Foucault, 2002a, p.148) analytic approach, exploring the discourses within archived resources, to retrace whether the spiritual dimension

of early childhood has ever been a policy focus is integrated into the theoretical framework. Foucault (2007) uses a perspective to examine “a genealogy of technologies of power” (p.36) reliant on the underpinning objectives, strategies and the actions in the political sense. Therefore, a genealogy approach is used to research the historic early childhood education policy discourse to search for spiritual development references. This begins with the EYFS statutory framework (DfE, 2014a) as the thread leading the retrospective “documentary research” (Wellington, 2015, p.208). Ball (1999) proposes that, when analysing policies of changing governments “...we need to attend as much to the continuities as to the differences” (p.196). Differences or policy shifts may result in policy discontinuity, Foucault (2002b) proposes the notion of “discontinuity” (p.196) as a change of thinking replaced by something else within a culture. Therefore, in Chapter 4 the policy analysis aims to identify policy continuity, discontinuity and where applicable differences. This approach is used alongside a framework of analysis adapted from a series of questions for policy analysis proposed by Rizvi and Lingard (2010).

Watson’s (2017, p.12) model of spirituality described as “key, interrelated values” is combined in the theoretical framework to provide a spiritual analytical component. The spiritual discourse is tensioned by disagreements surrounding definability as it is broadly proposed that spirituality is difficult to define. However, this is challenged by Watson (2017). I selected Watson’s (2017) four spirituality interrelated values because they are anticipated to be common across disciplines and apply to professional practice across all age ranges. These are presented in Figure 1.1.

Spirituality - Key Values (Watson, 2017, p.12)
1. Spiritual diversity and inclusivity.
2. Human rights and the right to spiritual voice.
3. A critique of market-driven performativity and a focus on the whole child (and person).
4. Spiritual practice.

Figure 1.1 Watson’s (2017) key spirituality interrelated values

1.8 Spiritual awakening – the teaching pathway underpinning positionality

Before presenting the research questions, this section of the chapter is centred on positionality. Wellington (2015) notes positionality is "...a statement of the researcher's position" (p.102). My "spiritual awareness" (Harris, 2007, p.266) in education developed whilst working in pre-compulsory education where I experienced the introduction of the Foundation Stage (QCA, 2000) and the EYFS (DCSF, 2008a). During undergraduate studies I was introduced to reflective journal writing and applying theory to practice (Hunt, 2001).

Reflection on practice led to a point of "spiritual awakening" (Harris, 2007, p.266), alerting me to the diversity of spirituality, which occurred after reading a school inspection report highlighting activities fostering spiritual development in the pre-compulsory and primary education context. Familiar with Christian spirituality, I began searching for literature to explore what Wright (1998) describes as the "plurality of spiritual traditions" (p.86). I accessed Dowling's (2005) chapter discussing young children's spirituality, written in the context of early childhood education and care. Ofsted's (2004a) literature focused on spiritual development was also accessible. I concluded that in order to maintain an inclusive spirituality approach (Watson, 2017), religion and spiritual can be intertwined (Wright, 2005) or separated (Adams et al., 2016) depending on an individual's beliefs.

Later, the motivation to research children's spirituality increased when I started teaching on early education and childcare undergraduate degree programmes focused on child development from birth to eight years. One module included spiritual development and I continued the search for spiritual definitions, taking into account promoting spiritual development was advocated in EYFS practice guidance (DCSF, 2008b) and legislated in primary education (HMSO, 2002). I began reading a translation of literature written by Froebel (2005) which signalled the importance of accessing primary sources in academia. Froebel's (2005) spiritual writing became embedded in my teaching, connecting play and the exploration of the natural environment to spirituality. While studying as a postgraduate, I researched one aspect of spiritual development, namely promoting awe, wonder and mystery in early years practice (Hudson, 2011).

In contrast to Montessori (1995; 1967) and Steiner (2013; 1998), I began to notice Froebel's (2005) spiritual viewpoint is under-represented in early childhood spirituality research. This point was also noted by Best (2016), who argues that with regard to spirituality, "Academic scholarship of this specific aspect of Froebel's work seems singularly lacking" (p.274). However, changes to the EYFS in 2012 (DfE, 2012) occurred while I was studying the Part 1 compulsory modules of the Doctor of Education (EdD) programme. In the Nutbrown Review (2012), an independent review of early education and childcare qualifications, it was recommended "...that the content of level 3 qualifications be strengthened, to include more child development and play..." (p.6). Yet, I started to notice reference to the spiritual dimension of childhood is sparse in general texts for early years practitioners training to achieve level 2 and level 3 qualifications. For example, where holistic development is defined, the spiritual dimension is not always represented and is rarely indexed in the texts.

Clarification is needed here, I am not suggesting any aspect of child development should be compartmentalised or is more important than another. What cannot be ignored though, is the redundancy implied from the removal of a spiritual focus in definitions of holistic development alongside erosion from macro-level practice guidance (Early Education, 2012). This removal suggests unease about the spiritual and spirituality in these early education and childcare resources, that appear not to explicitly recognise the children's rights to develop spiritually (Sagberg, 2017; UNICEF, 1989).

1.9 The research questions

The primary question is:

- What does spirituality mean to practitioners and parents of young children in contemporary early years practice within the Early Years Foundation Stage of England?

I also designed four secondary questions to maintain a focus on both early childhood education policy and practice, these are:

- How do practitioners and parents of young children define spirituality?

- What does provision for promoting spiritual development look like in everyday practice?
- What is the relevance of promoting spiritual development in contemporary early years practice in England?
- To what extent does the promotion of young children's spiritual development exist in early education and childcare qualification training?

Further reference to the research questions in Chapter 3 demonstrates how these connect to the research methods and the field questions (Wellington, 2015). In Chapter 5 the findings of the study are presented responding to the research questions.

1.10 The structure of the thesis

Structured in a traditional presentation, a review of literature in **Chapter 2** illustrates research studies and essays specifically focused on early childhood spirituality. **Chapter 3** outlines the methodology and research methods selected to conduct the research and the ethical framework underpinning the research. **Chapter 4** reports the documentary and policy analysis focused on the spiritual discourse. **Chapter 5** presents the findings analysed from the data with an aim to answer the research questions. In **Chapter 6** the findings are discussed. The conclusion reported in **Chapter 7** highlights the implications and recommendations for policy and practice development, along with a reflexive account of the scope and limitations of the research.

In the next chapter the reviewed literature is presented that informed the objectives and research questions of this study.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The position of young children's spirituality in the English ECE policy and practice interface is considered in this thesis. The reviewed literature I present in this chapter aims to connect past research to the present (Foucault, 2002a). Gaps in knowledge identified in the Birth to Three Matters (DfES, 2002) literature review exposed a need for "...research information about ECEC and children in this age group, especially that about two year olds; young children's spiritual and moral development, and the impact of practitioner training on children's and parents' experiences of ECEC" (David et al., 2003, p.184). Although no direct reference to children's spirituality appeared in the Birth to Three Matters framework (Goodliff, 2016), the pedagogical approach encompassed knowing self, connecting with others, belongingness, exploring the world and emotional well-being. The Birth to Three Matters literature review (David et al., 2003) presented Meggit's (2001, p.2) "aspects of health diagram" which included spiritual health together with five other health aspects. These six aspects of health filtered into the supporting resources of the EYFS, with the spiritual aspect referred to as "spiritual well-being" (DCSF, 2008c, p.1.4). Similarly, children's spiritual well-being is embedded in the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, 2009) for children from birth to five years (Erwin, 2017). Likewise, spiritual dimensions are fostered in the Te Whāriki early childhood curriculum of New Zealand (Ministry of Education, 2017; 1996), embracing the holistic development of the child, reaffirming this with reference to the mind, body and spirit.

The child-centred spiritual well-being discourse raises awareness to a spectrum which discloses both the light and dark sides of spirituality (de Souza, 2012; Adams, 2010). Adams (2010) describes children's "unseen worlds" (p.18) which expose a plethora of experiences that children may express to others, and in the context of early years practice, to practitioners and peers. These unseen worlds for some children present happy times and magical moments,

whereas the frightening darker worlds have the potential to leave unpleasant childhood memories and threaten emotional well-being. Fear of the night sparked by darkness and nightmares are just two examples, although these darker worlds may also exist in the day (Adams, 2010). Spirituality studies reflect children's experiences of "ecological transition" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p.26), for example as patients in hospitals, they have been conducted by chaplains, teachers and nurses in this environment. Yet, shared family experiences contribute to funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992), thereby children may relate to the birth of siblings, friends and relatives' illness or death, without entering a hospital. Therefore, I widened the literature search to find studies conducted outside of educational environments along with international and national educational research. These studies have informed my spiritual understanding and contributed to the development of the research objectives (Appendix 3) which I present in this chapter.

I used Watson's (2017) values model in the analysis, which as presented in Chapter 1 divide into four themes: diversity and inclusivity in the context of defining spirituality, the spiritual rights of children, holistic development and learning, and spiritual practice. I begin by affirming the historical position of nurturing spirituality in ECE which leads to debates troubling the development of an agreed universal definition. Following this, I present findings from child focused spirituality studies. The chapter ends with research studies focused on the scope and limitations of resources which aim to equip parents and practitioners to nurture young children's spirituality during life changing events.

2.2 The roots of early childhood education, the embedding of the promotion of children's spiritual development by pioneers of early childhood education

Tracing back to the roots of early childhood education this section locates the spiritual educational philosophy of three pioneers of early childhood education, Friedrich Froebel, Maria Montessori and Rudolf Steiner, who continue to influence early years practice in England (Nutbrown and Clough, 2014). Historically, the impact of Froebel and Montessori on English education is illustrated in Hadow's 1933 Report of the Consultative Committee on Infant and

Nursery Schools (Board of Education, 1933), a point discussed further in Chapter 4. Predominantly, in their literature these three pioneers robustly reference to the spiritual dimension of early childhood and diversely advocate the importance of nurturing spirituality. Froebel (2005) for example, suggests "...the inner being, the spirit, the divine essence of things and of man, is known by its outward manifestations" (p.5). Spiritually, getting to know the self, others and nature permeates the life cycle, whilst being guided by education (Froebel, 2005). Furthermore, Froebel shared his religious belief that education should "lead and guide man...to peace with nature, and to unity with God" (2005, p.5). Significant to this thesis and to early childhood is his spiritual lens that declared play as a spiritual activity (Froebel, 2005). Whilst also extolling the spiritual benefits for the child who explores the natural environment, for example, Froebel (2005) explains climbing a tree to experience the view from the top of a tree is a completely different experience for the child than the obscured view from the ground.

In the contemporary context, some early years settings across the UK access woods and forests for young children to participate in outdoor activities, engaging a Forest School learning approach (Knight, 2016). If Froebel's (2005) perspective of the spiritual qualities of play is used to analyse an ECE policy containing no spiritual references, where advocating play and exploration of the natural world is explicit, it could be interpreted that the promotion of spiritual development is implicit. Wood (2010) informs practitioners of the possibility of children "experiencing transcendental and spiritual qualities" (p.20) through play, which may take place in the children's seen and unseen worlds (Adams, 2010). Reference to the spiritual characteristics of play in text are infrequent which I argue is a missed opportunity to inform ECE practitioners of the spiritual theoretical benefits of play, or to exemplify what 'spiritual' means in professional practice.

Attempting to pin 'spiritual' down to present a common understanding to suit all tensions the spirituality discourse. Priestley (1997) proposed description might be more appropriate than definition. Froebel's (2005) words justifying the spiritual aspects of play include peace, freedom and joy. Thereby, Froebel's

(2005) words infer independence and the internal empowerment of play through spiritual nourishment, which has the capacity to impact emotional well-being and the child's agency. This is similar to Roberts' (2010) notion of wellbeing play, which she defines as "child-initiated, open-ended and unrushed" (p.97). In addition, wellbeing play is described as "...full of freedom and imagination" (Roberts, 2010, p.97). In contrast, some children may experience play restrictions that yield opposite outcomes, for example unhappiness, loss of freedom, discontentment, restlessness and feelings of emptiness that may hinder spiritual development. However, archived English ECE policy frameworks and practice guidance seem to use spiritually associated words as indicators of spiritual development (DCSF, 2008b; QCA, 2000; SCAA, 1996). For example, joy, freedom and peace formed part of the Personal and Social Development desirable outcome (SCAA, 1996), freedom and peace featured in the Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage (QCA, 2000) and the practice guidance for the EYFS (DCSF, 2008b). These policies will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4. Nevertheless, a range of spiritually related words, including freedom and connectedness, are critiqued by de Souza (2012) as being used "to capture the concept" (p.293) of spirituality, but do not clarify or completely define what spirituality means. Some researchers, according to de Souza (2012) "...reject a definition of spirituality – because they feel that it may reduce the concept to only a part of what it is" (p.293). Indeed, as illustrated later in this chapter many spirituality and spiritual development definitions are proposed.

The notion of freedom is also discussed in the literature of Montessori (1967). Freedom from a Montessorian perspective, applies to development that is focused on the mind, which she differentiates from physical growth (Montessori, 1967). Montessori (1995) refers to the "spiritual embryo" (p.60) and to a "spiritual halo" (p.61) whilst urging the child's bodily life must not overshadow mental life. I interpret this proposal of nurturing mental life in the cognitive sense, yet it also fits with the contemporary well-being agenda (Allen, 2011; Field, 2010; HMSO, 2006). The adult is identified with fostering freedom which relies on the teachers' role to stand back from distracting the child to encourage self-direction or what might be described in the context of child-adult power

dynamics as fostering “power within” (Eaude, 2014, p.238) the child. Montessori (1995) contrasts the adult role to one of a valet who prepares items, for the use of the master who is described as “the child’s spirit” (p.281), without expressing how to use them. The skills that children developed in their activities were transferable and used in their visits to church, for example silence, stillness and using fine motor skills to light candles (Montessori, 1967). Montessori’s educational approach and religious education curriculum has since inspired Berryman’s (2009) development of Godly Play, which teaches children Christian language “...as a means to know God and to make existential meaning” (p.145). Within a spiral curriculum beginning in early childhood, Godly Play promotes wonder and children asking questions (Nye, 2009). Young children may access this curriculum outside of early years settings.

Steiner, addressed the British people in 1923 when visiting Ilkley to explain the founding educational principles of the Waldorf School founded in Stuttgart in Germany following wartime (Steiner, 1998). In his lecture he raised educational awareness to focus on the physical being alongside the acknowledgment of the human soul and spirit as he proposed “...the full knowledge of the human being can only be gained when spirit, soul and body are all understood in equal measure” (Steiner, 1998, p.170). Yet, Steiner (1998) emphasised a crucial time is within the seventh year of a child’s life, in his words “...when children change their teeth a complete transformation and metamorphosis takes place in the life of the child” (p.171). Prior to this phase, the child is perceived as an imitator and the adult is urged to only exhibit behaviour suitable for children to see and imitate (Steiner, 1998).

Another example of Steiner’s (2013) spiritual advocacy relates to his analysis of the spiritual worlds of fairy tales, suggesting that children before the change of their teeth, are often exposed to stories incorporating happiness. Fairy tales pass down through generations, some are retold in moving images in films, the storyteller sharing the story imaginatively to suggest something that is fantasy is real (Gill and Papatheodorou, 1999). Steiner (2013) was questioned on the impact of stories of the Easter Bunny and Saint Nicholas on the child when the adult does not believe in the concept. Steiner (2013) suggested there are ways

to find the belief and confirmed he could not say "...that I do not believe in the 'Easter bunny'" (Steiner, 2013, p.80). Children's beliefs however, can change with their experiences and Adams (2010) shares this view in the concept of children's understanding of Santa Claus and for some ghosts. In their search for meaning children question and wonder, whilst their views as well as beliefs may be shaped by the answers or new information they receive from others - adults or children - thereby, illustrating a socio-cultural (Vygotsky, 1978) view of developing spirituality.

These selected examples only introduce the spiritual insight of these pioneers. As these three pioneers continue to influence ECE in England an objective of this thesis is to critically analyse the position of the promotion of young children's spiritual development in legislation and macro-level practice guidance. This is presented in Chapter 4. Later in this chapter I refer to research (Bone, 2008a; 2008b; 2005) conducted in settings following the principles of education of Montessori and Steiner. The next section presents issues surrounding defining spirituality.

2.3 Defining spirituality and spiritual development

If a starting point to clarify spirituality is thought to be through a definition some of those proposed in literature are dissimilar. Yet, such terms as "reconceptualising" (Harris, 2007, p.263) have been applied to spiritual development. Hyde et al. (2013) warn against deconstructing spirituality as they argue when deconstruction occurs there is a danger of reconstruction and a risk of not putting it back together. Nevertheless, when spirituality is a focus of research it is noticeable researchers provide their working definition of what spiritual development or spirituality means to them while illustrating their positionality (Goodliff, 2016). This might be perceived as a level of deconstruction as defining spiritual development is perceived as "elusive" (Eaude, 2005, p.237). Therefore, there is a risk of confusing practitioners rather than providing clarification when the intention is to demystify this area of development. Table 2.1 elucidates a sample of published definitions of spirituality, Mata (2014) and Bone's (2008b) studies are discussed later in this chapter. Ofsted's (2015a) inspection framework outline of how pupils

demonstrate spiritual development is included in this sample, because this reflects different faiths.

Table 2.1 A sample of definitions of spirituality and spiritual development

A sample of spirituality and spiritual development definitions
“Spirituality is the practice of, or the study of, the ways in which human beings are related to each other, to creation and to God, and live or fail to live in love” (Thatcher, 1992, p.2).
“Spirituality is a way of appreciating the wonder and mystery of everyday life. It alerts me to the possibility for love, happiness, goodness, peace and compassion in the world” (Bone, 2008b, p.266).
‘Spirituality’—“a search for meaning and purpose in which there is implicit recognition of the interconnectedness of all things” (Hunt, 2009, p.86).
Spirituality – “an innate, human characteristic that allows us to connect with transcendence and/or the divine and feel part of the universe. Spirituality thus encompasses the individual capacity and the essence of life, providing humans with a greater consciousness and more profound understanding of being” (Mata, 2014, p.114).
The spiritual development of pupils is shown by their: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ability to be reflective about their own beliefs, religious or otherwise, that inform their perspective on life and their interest in and respect for different people’s faiths, feelings and values • sense of enjoyment and fascination in learning about themselves, others and the world around them • use of imagination and creativity in their learning • willingness to reflect on their experiences (Ofsted, 2015a, p.35).

McCreery (1994) noted in a literature review conducted to research how ‘spiritual’ was defined, the responsibility in schools for teachers to support children’s spiritual development had been enshrined in legislation since 1944 (HMSO, 1944), yet found “In the UK it is almost impossible to find any recent exploration of the term outside R.E.” (p.93). This illustrates one position of spirituality which is viewing religion and spiritual as synonymous. Thereby, in a curriculum this viewpoint potentially positions spirituality belonging to religious education (Nye and Hay, 1996). In contrast, more recently de Souza (2016) reported an online search which revealed people exhibiting their liking of the

statement “I’m spiritual but not religious” (p.2). Thereby, the second position disconnects religion and spiritual, which is construed by these respondents. Hann (2012) also describes two approaches to spirituality which he summarises as “a style of worship or a temperament” (p.74), the first is external and the second is internal. Hann (2012) also explains that in Catholic theology spirituality was originally defined as “the opposite of materiality” (p.74). Troubling the spirituality discourse further is the concept of the connection of spiritual to development (Adams et al., 2016; Pridmore and Pridmore, 2004; Eade, 2003; Priestley, 2000). Child development is often associated with set patterns confined to predetermined boundaries, requiring assessment measurements to validate progress. For example, Piaget (1932) proposed the ages and stages of children’s moral development as a predicted pattern of development. The uniqueness of human experience defies boundaries and the spontaneous triggers provoking the search for the meaning of life in childhood may never be witnessed externally in an educational setting, if at all. Measurability attracts assessment leading to target setting or goals which contravenes the concept of the unique child’s spiritual journey. The notion of spiritual growth is preferred by Priestley (2000), although ‘spiritual development’ is the term used in legislation and the National Curriculum (DfE, 2013a).

Nye and Hay (1996) reflected the need for a starting point for the empirical Children’s Spirituality Project based at Nottingham University. They developed three categories of spiritual sensitivities describing these as “awareness sensing...mystery sensing...value sensing” (Nye and Hay, 1996, p.146). These were further divided into sub-categories to aid analysis following the conversations with the child participants aged six to ten years. Mystery sensing for example included imagination, awe and wonder (Nye and Hay, 1996). Whereas, McCreery (1996) defined ‘spiritual’ for her educational research in 1994 with children aged four and five as “An awareness that there is something other, greater than the course of everyday events” (p.197). Conversations McCreery (1996) held with the children included the natural world, life - death and she also researched if the children had started asking ultimate questions. Asking ‘Who am I?’ aspires to searching for meaning, purpose and identity, requiring “meta-cognitive process” (Nye and Hay, 1996, p.146). It consciously

raises alertness to the self and what others perceive (Donaldson, 2006) and thereby to relational consciousness.

A further debate regarding spirituality is whether spiritual intelligence plays a part in the search for meaning. According to Vaughan (2002) as well as Zohar and Marshall (2001) seeking answers to ultimate questions requires spiritual intelligence. The existence of spiritual intelligence is challenged however, Mayer (2000) links spirituality and ultimate concerns to “heightened consciousness” (p.47). Gardner (2000; 1999) rejected adding spiritual intelligence to his list of multiple intelligences, whereas existential intelligence was partially accepted. Yet some of the children in McCreery’s (1996) study, shared their funds of knowledge through awareness and empathy of events happening in their families (Moll et al., 1992). Television was cited by McCreery (1996) as another environmental source, additional to home and school. Through television children can be exposed to a spectrum of topics, for example natural and imaginative worlds, seeing acts of kindness, violence, death and suffering. A point to consider here is how the advancement of digital technology now places such images in children’s hands through mobile devices. The findings from McCreery’s (1996) study indicate the importance of teachers taking the child’s lead, by listening to the child whilst supporting children exploring and questioning the world.

Eaude’s (2005) empirical research reported fourteen teachers’ perspectives of spiritual development working in ten early years units with children aged four and five years, he argues “most people want a clear, precise definition of what spirituality, or spiritual development, is” (p.237). At the time teachers were developing an understanding of their role and responsibility to promote pupils’ spiritual development across the curriculum. Essentially, this research focused on the practice of the teacher participants and not viewpoints of the children. The study findings suggest spiritual development overlapped with other areas of development, for example, religious and moral development, emotional and creative aspects of development (Eaude, 2005). Fundamentally, the young children’s spiritual rights (Sagberg, 2017; UNICEF, 1989) in primary school were considered in the research of Eaude (2005) and McCreery (1996).

Watson (2001) conducted research on how Ofsted inspectors were making their judgements regarding promoting spiritual development in secondary schools, described as "...an area much debated by educationalists" (p.205). Although Watson's (2001) research is not based on early years practice, it focused on seventy-five published secondary school Ofsted reports, and illustrates a mixed message, where some Ofsted inspectors focused on collective worship and religious education when at the same time advocated a "...secular spirituality" (p.215) approach. As previously mentioned, Ofsted had published a definition of spiritual development in 1994 which was later refined in 2004 to inclusively "...respect pupils' different religious and other backgrounds" (Ofsted, 2004a, p.11). Inclusive means for all schools and "...people of all faiths as well as those of no faith" (Ofsted, 2004a, p.11). Ofsted's (2004a) guidance also defined moral, social and cultural development.

Making sense of spirituality is also presented in international studies. In the United States, Schein (2014) noted concern regarding the lack of reference to children's spiritual development in ECE curricula. Schein (2014) researched the role of nature in promoting spiritual development in the early childhood education context. Spirituality is described in this study as "an inborn, human trait" (Schein, 2014, p.82) and the roles of love and attachment in the nurturing of spirituality in the early years are advocated. These factors are also promoted by Surr (2012; 2011). The findings of Schein's study propose a system that forms two phases, spiritual development and "spiritual moments" (Schein, 2014, p.87). Schein (2014) incorporates the concepts of wonder, joy and inner peace in a preliminary definition of spiritual development. In addition, Schein (2014) suggests three aspects underpinning spiritual development, "igniting deep connections...nurturing basic dispositions...developing complex dispositions" (p.83). Whilst Schein (2014) noted a question in the interviews where the twelve early educator participants were asked "What kinds of learning activities and experiences foster a child's spiritual development?" (p. 87), at times, yielded silence and some of the participants indicated the newness of the question to them. Moreover, the participants' responses focused on the environment rather than activities and experiences proposing "what was needed to create spiritual moments" (Schein, 2014, p.87). Some of the participants also

linked spirituality to values to live by, for example, kindness, self-care and responsibility (Schein, 2014).

A further study exploring practitioners understanding of spirituality was conducted by Mata (2014) in Chicago, Table 2.1 contains Mata's (2014) spirituality definition. The research participants were eleven female students referred to as "...teacher candidates" (Mata, 2014, p.115) and spirituality was a topic introduced in an online university class. Mata (2014) chose resources for the students to explore the topic and planned not to seek the students' "...religious or spiritual backgrounds" (p.115) in advance, as the first objective was for the students to share their understanding of spirituality in the online discussion. Alongside this, the students reflected on the position of spirituality in the context of ECE and how they perceived this could be embedded in practice (Mata, 2014). The study findings demonstrate the agreement of ten out of eleven of the participants "...defined spirituality in terms other than religious" (Mata, 2014, p.117) and the same number suggested "...spirituality definitely belongs in early childhood classrooms" (p.117). Suggestions were also made of how nurturing spirituality might be put into practice through activities, such as nature tables and walks, yoga, meditation and reflective opportunities.

In addition, Mata (2014) proposes strategies to further nurture spirituality, including the six-criteria model proposed by Nye (2009, p.41) "SPIRIT – space, process, imagination, relationship, intimacy, trust". Nye (2009) outlines the versatility of the six criteria within a Christian perspective, suggesting they can be applied in all practice with children and in the home. In addition, Nye (2009) argues these can be used as a "...checklist to help take stock of how well children's spirituality is being supported" (p.41). Thereby the six criteria suggested by Nye (2009) are adaptable and applicable to the ECE environment, nevertheless they are not intended to measure spiritual development. Mata (2014) concluded from her study the importance of supporting children to personally reflect on their own spirituality and for reflective teachers to nurture spirituality in the classrooms.

However, the uncertainty surrounding the meaning of spirituality and spiritual development is not restricted to educational research. It is reported in research

studies in paediatric and adult nursing contexts (Baldacchino, 2011; Smith and McSherry, 2004) and youth development (Benson and Roehlkepartain, 2008). Therefore, an objective of this study is to invite the practitioners and the parents of young children to share their definitions of spirituality as the starting point. In the next section the literature focuses on empirical studies of children's spirituality.

2.4 Spirituality and the young child

Adams et al. (2008) argue that children's spiritual lives and the potential of childhood to nurture spirituality is not always recognised. So far, children's spiritual rights (Watson, 2017) in early childhood, under the age of four and before the Reception year of primary education in England, have not been represented in this review. Reference to children's spirituality below the age of three years is very limited in research. Hall (2016) highlights the importance of spiritual care in the midwifery context of the unborn, newborn and the mother. Babies extend the family, forming the next generation which is often spiritually celebrated (Surr, 2012). Paradoxically, light and dark sides of spirituality can manifest at this time. The anticipation of celebrating new life (King, 2013; Surr, 2012) can be altered by challenges, for example babies requiring neonatal specialist care, and at times parents and families experience unexpected loss of life (Hall, 2016). Hall (2016) comments on the limited professional development opportunities provided for midwives to explore spirituality. In the nursing context, McSherry and Jamieson (2013) discuss spirituality proposing "It is only recently that the word has become a common parlance" (p.3171) when they reported the findings of the Royal College of Nursing survey researching nurses' perspectives of spirituality and spiritual care. However, across disciplines (Watson, 2017), there is scope to contextualise spiritual literacy (King, 2013) or spiritual language (Sagberg, 2017) in lifelong learning with the foundations commencing in the early years (Moss, 2013).

Studies of young children's spirituality have been conducted nationally and internationally. In the majority the children in the following studies are aged two years or older. Taking place in Australia, Giesenberg's (2000) qualitative study

based on a data collection through participant observation began with fifty-six young children aged from three years. This study included conversations with the children's parents and the staff in four pre-school and kindergarten settings. In addition to observations during play, conversations with the children and responses to music played during rest periods recorded through drawings and paintings (Giesenberg, 2000). The universality of music is recognised by Bourdieu (2010) who refers to the connectedness of music and spirituality, describing it as "...the most 'spiritual' of the arts of the spirit and a love of music is a guarantee of 'spirituality'" (p.10). The methods used in the study by Giesenberg (2000) captured the children's spiritually related expressions and demonstrated their meaning making within their experiences. These included experiences gained from exploring the natural world that stimulated curiosity transformed into questions, leading to Giesenberg (2000) reporting the wonder children articulated through their questioning and their comments related to studying "...rainbows and bugs, and by watching the birth of guinea pigs" (p.32). Examples of children's wonder have been recorded historically, for example they are evidenced in the literature of Isaacs (1930) recorded in observations and illustrate the importance of listening to children. Giesenberg (2000) noted the children painted their interpretation of the music through colour changes and adding images while they observed the pitch and rhythm, some children engaging in conversation whilst others were silent.

Celebrations and traditions, such as a birthday and Easter were recorded by one child, underpinned by the giving and receipt of presents for birthdays and eggs at Easter. The drawing also contained carrots intended for the Easter Bunny (Giesenberg, 2000), an example of children's beliefs and knowledge of traditions (Steiner, 2013; Adams, 2010). Death was also identified as a topic related to pets and heaven, in addition the mention of God by the children was reported twice, one example observed one child connecting God to love in her painting, stating "God is love" (Giesenberg, 2000, p.31). Furthermore, parents were able to raise awareness of their children's concern of worldwide issues linked to natural disasters and war. Giesenberg (2000) suggests this demonstration of compassion, is indicative of "...a part of a person's spirituality"

(p.31), not only in adults but in children as well. Giesenberg's (2000) study has implications for observation in early years practice, thus demonstrating the need to see the bigger picture, to value the children's spiritual voices (Watson, 2017) within their exploration of the environment, during expressions through actions, verbal and non-verbal signs, in mark making and creativity. It also demonstrates the importance of including parents in research to connect the home and early years setting environments (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

The study of Champagne (2003) questioned how and if spirituality can be recognised in children aged three to six years. This research stems from her role as a hospital chaplain in Canada, spiritually supporting families with children "...sick or injured" (Champagne, 2003, p.43). Whilst noting issues of methodology of research in respect of younger children, a key question posed is "...how can we access this spirituality when interviews are inappropriate and in-depth conversations are not adapted to their language abilities?" (Champagne, 2003, p.43). Therefore, the sixty children in the study were observed in three day centres to capture daily life in the settings. The findings of this research suggest three modes of children's being in the spiritual sense, identified by Champagne (2003) as "Sensitive, Relational and Existential" (p.44). A spiritual dimension and theological implications were applied within this framework.

In England concerns were raised by Pridmore and Pridmore (2004) relating to spirituality and the experiences of sick children from an educational viewpoint, of missing school through illness and injury. In this study, primary data was gathered through semi-structured interviews and obtained from three hospital-based school teachers, a hospice founder for children and two children's hospital chaplains highlighting the here and now situation of children with terminal illness (Pridmore and Pridmore, 2004). In the context of legislative and regulatory frameworks Pridmore and Pridmore (2004, p.23) propose "...the promotion of spiritual development is a statutory demand in the schooling of sick children" as they identify some of the educational barriers endured by children who are sick or injured, resulting in missing lessons and the risk of not achieving as well in examinations. Their concern for the holistic well-being of

the children is encapsulated in the statement “And they suffer spiritually” (Pridmore and Pridmore, 2004, p.22). Issues faced by children, such as loss of friendships and self-worth, changes in physical development related to their illness, alongside the endurance of pain and periods away from home are identified as contributing to “spiritual distress” (Pridmore and Pridmore, 2004, p.27).

One poignant verbatim statement reported by a hospital teacher participant, related to a boy months before his death, his age was not stated, “...I’m not going to come to school because I’m not going to grow up” (Pridmore and Pridmore, 2004, p.28). The teacher continued in her interview to suggest this was atypical and in her experience “Normally children don’t say this; normally they grab everything they can” (Pridmore and Pridmore, 2004, p.28). Yet, this literature raises the awareness of living in the here and now, the search for the meaning of life and the reality some children face is there may not be a tomorrow. Whilst at the same time in this study, the teachers reflect on the uniqueness of creating awe and wonder moments at the bedside, for the children and families to celebrate, to cherish joy and excitement (Pridmore and Pridmore, 2004). Fundamentally, this study focused on children who were sick, Pridmore and Pridmore (2004) conclude the need for children to be supported to avoid “spiritual distress” (p.27) and to be nurtured spiritually in education. It also raises awareness to the need of holistic approaches to embrace inclusivity and the spiritual rights of the children throughout every stage of life (Sagberg, 2017; Watson, 2017).

There are other negative experiences that must be taken into consideration as a barrier to spiritual development, including abusive situations some children encounter (Maltby and Hall, 2012). Attachment is illustrated in studies regarding God in human relationships and in contrast traumatic experiences of adults (Maltby and Hall, 2012). Maltby and Hall (2012) define trauma “...as an event that represents a threat to life or personal integrity” (p.304), this can be abusive situations. Furthermore, this is not confined to adult experiences, Maltby and Hall (2012) note the trauma children may experience from abusive situations and from an attachment perspective they argue “...trauma can also

be experienced when children are faced with a caregiver who acts erratically” (p.304). This literature represents the dark side of spirituality (de Souza, 2012), that is often removed from thought, yet is important to acknowledge to nurture spirituality in professional practice (Watson, 2017).

Bone (2008b) also discusses aspects of the less joyful side of spirituality, as she illustrates the spiritual activity of play and the notion of this in the concept of “spiritual elsewhere” (p.273). She proposes this is a space where children and adults can venture in times of need, possibly to escape or think a situation through (Bone, 2008b). The observations analysed in this study, in New Zealand, suggest children comfortably changed roles in imaginary play and used props accordingly to ameliorate situations (Bone, 2008b). Bone (2008b) likens this to adults praying, children might engage in imaginary play that has transformative aspects, therefore the “spiritual elsewhere” (p.273) accommodates the capacity to transform their world and possibly provide protection from painful experiences. Hence, spiritual experiences may be perceived as inward, while they might be outwardly exhibited (Bone, 2008b). This demonstrates why spirituality research is sensitive and the uniqueness of the spiritual journey.

Mata-McMahon et al. (2018) report the findings from a survey completed by thirty-three educators in the United States. The study aimed to research whether early childhood educators intentionally nurtured spirituality in their classroom practice in a secular context where it is not mandatory (Mata-McMahon et al., 2018). Mata-McMahon et al. (2018) analysed the study respondents “...associate high-quality early education principles and practices with nurturing the child’s spirit” (p.16). The respondents proposed a range of activities they integrate into practice, for example children accessing nature, open and quiet spaces, experiencing well-organised classrooms, as well as awe and wonder. It is suggested in this research that nurturing spirituality occurs in the “hidden curriculum” (Mata-McMahon et al., 2018, p.15). Primarily, the teachers’ spirituality is proposed as a teacher resource, it is noted educators “...must nurture their own spirituality to best support the child’s developing spirit” (Mata-McMahon et al., 2018, p.15). Contemplative practices are

identified, with some teachers engaging in daily prayers and some respondents incorporated meditation, mindfulness and walks exploring nature into classroom practice of secular settings. In contrast, in the next section I present studies focused on children's spirituality conducted in New Zealand because the early childhood curriculum, Te Whāriki (Ministry of Education, 2017; 1996), is an explicit example of how spirituality is woven into the curriculum.

2.5 Spirituality in the early childhood curriculum: Te Whāriki of New Zealand

Compared to the EYFS (DfE, 2014a) there is a transparent spiritual aspect in the holistic early childhood curriculum, Te Whāriki, from birth to compulsory schooling at six years, in New Zealand (Ministry of Education, 2017; 1996). Blaiklock (2010) explains "Te Whāriki, means woven mat in Maori" (p.201) and Bone (2005) proposes in this bicultural curriculum "...the 'whāriki', or 'woven mat' includes recognition of diversity" (p.308). Furthermore, Bone (2005) suggests this applies not only to culture and language, it includes "philosophical difference" (p.308). Yet, the aspirations stated for children within Te Whāriki are in some ways similar to those of the EYFS (DfE, 2014a; 2012; DCSF, 2008a) and subsequently the Every Child Matters Framework (DfES, 2004). For instance, there are similarities through the reference to "competent and confident learners and communicators" (Ministry of Education, 1996, p.9) and "...secure in their sense of belonging and in the knowledge that they make a valued contribution to society" (Ministry of Education, 1996, p.9). However, situated between these two statements in the curriculum document is a significantly different reference from the EYFS (DfE, 2017a; 2014a) acknowledging the spirit of the child "...healthy in mind, body, and spirit" (Ministry of Education, 1996, p.9). In Te Whāriki (Ministry of Education, 1996) these identified aspirations acknowledge all aspects of the children's development and these aspirations remain in the 2017 revised curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2017), with the wording unchanged.

The spiritual dimension of holistic development is encapsulated in the statement "Adults should recognise the important place of spirituality in the development of the whole child, particularly for Māori and Tagata Pasefika families" (Ministry of

Education, 1996, p.47). Therefore, the promotion of children's spiritual development is embedded within this curriculum and the focus of the holistic development of the child is also firmly stated in the principles of the curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2017; 1996).

Fraser (2004) discusses a study of nine teachers' perspectives of spirituality in mainstream primary secular schools and identifies the "...continuum between life and death" (p.91) as a spiritual dimension of Māori values through the connection between the living child and their ancestors. A key point raised within the literature is "...relationships for Māori are ongoing and not limited by the visible, conscious, constructs of animated life" (Fraser, 2004, p.92). One example of practice quoted by a teacher illustrates "When I talk with a child, about what they are doing, I do not just see that child in front of me. I see all the people connected to that child, going back generations in a great cluster" (Fraser, 2004, p.91). Further examples of practice draw on children discussing conversations with deceased relatives and the inclusion of them in everyday and celebratory events (Fraser, 2004). Therefore, it is essential for practitioners to have knowledge of these beliefs surrounding death and afterlife, to nurture children's spirituality within an early childhood curriculum that embraces spiritual values (Ministry of Education, 2017; 1996). However, Blaiklock (2010) questioned the effectiveness of the 1996 curriculum and the limited research undertaken to measure effectiveness, while at the same time identified the positive support of this curriculum by academics and the early childhood practitioners of New Zealand.

The other three principles of Te Whāriki (Ministry of Education, 1996) alongside holistic development are "Empowerment, Family and Community, Relationships" (p.13) interwoven with the five strands "Well-being, Belonging, Contribution, Communication, Exploration" (p.13). Hence, the research on children's spiritual development (Bone, 2008a; 2008b; 2005) in New Zealand demonstrates the principles and strands of Te Whāriki (Ministry of Education, 1996). Bone's (2005) research was conducted in three settings in New Zealand, described as "A Rudolph Steiner (or Waldorf) kindergarten, a Montessori school and an early childhood pre-school" (p.308). This research

explored “everyday spirituality” (Bone, 2005, p.309) within the concept of food. Bone (2005) focused on observed spiritual experiences of children within the three settings using the metaphor of “breaking bread” (p.307) to analyse social practice surrounding preparing and sharing food. By this she emphasises how this is often related to as “...food for the mind, feeding the spirit and food for the soul” (Bone, 2005, p.308). The children were aged from two-and-a-half to five years in the Montessori school and pre-school, however, in the Steiner kindergarten the children were four to seven years of age. A key point raised by Bone (2005) is that decision making in the context of food activities rests with the teacher, in respect of the focus and cultural practice.

A comparison of the customs, rituals and involvement of the children is reported in this research. Bone (2005) reported in the Steiner kindergarten the making of bread was “...a way of tuning into the rhythms of the day” (p.310). Thus, this holistic experience involved children participating in the making of the bread, handling and sharing of food together. Bone (2005) notes these experiences could be lost or diminished with health and safety restrictions that prevent handling food to be received by others. The children can use the bread recipe at home, yet it is noted that a child implied to their parent the bread tastes different when it is made at home, the teacher responded to this comment suggesting “...it’s the way it’s made and the way it’s eaten together” (Bone, 2005, p.310). Bone (2005) suggests “...in this setting bread symbolises the spark of life that becomes tangible in food” (p.310). Therefore, baking of bread in this setting provides a multi-sensory fulfilment of making food and the coming together to share the end product that provides an experience reflecting the philosophy of Steiner (Bone, 2005; Steiner, 1998). However, there was no compulsion to eat the bread and the left overs were shared with “Mother Earth and taken to the compost” (Bone, 2005, p.311). By this, the children were made aware of recycling and as Bone (2005) points out “...children were introduced to the cycle of life and death” (p.311). Thus, Bone proposes the practice of teachers is encapsulated within “everyday spirituality” (Bone, 2005, p.311) as it informs their practice.

In contrast, within the Montessori setting Bone (2005) observed the sharing of water which children led and the use of “grace” (p.312). This required the children to serve each other and when served to respond with gratitude to exhibit verbally their manners (Bone, 2005). The freedom to access a table by choice to share fruit and cheese contributed to a relaxed environment where children could take time to enjoy food and socialise. Fundamentally, the concept of choice is highlighted here alongside the philosophy of Montessori outlined by Bone (2005) “...the self-chosen activity of the child has the power to awaken the soul” (p.312). Primarily, independence and the importance of children engaging in reflection, at times in solitude appeared to have been captured in Bone’s (2005) research as a child sliced an egg to eat. It was the reactive enjoyment of slicing and eating the egg and the child’s determination to complete the activity independently, including washing, drying and putting away the utensils that might be described as “...being in the moment” (Bone, 2005, p.313). However, for other children the experience might not be the same, so this is one example of a child’s unhurried self-chosen task using their senses, captured through observation.

In Bone’s (2005) third case study setting, the parents prepared food in packages for the children to eat throughout the day, thereby requiring the children to make choices as to what they ate first within the day and what they reserved for later. The teachers were involved in supporting the children to remove the food from the packages and the emphasis was placed on sharing values, including manners (Bone, 2005). The connectedness to the home and family were captured in the eating experience, where children spoke freely about their families as they ate together. Some of the children had notes from parents in their lunchboxes and Bone (2005) observed one message was a drawing of a heart. In her words “...love in a lunchbox” (Bone, 2005, p.314) which she analysed as “...the wish of the parents to be with their child in spirit” (p.314). The research findings of Bone (2005) are linked to everyday spirituality within a curriculum focusing on nurturing the child’s spirituality.

Bone (2005) concluded the breaking of bread “...is a way of encouraging harmony, affirming life, celebrating change” (p.316). This links to the

requirements of the curriculum (Ministry of Education, 1996), as Bone (2005) suggests "...honouring the spirit of the child" (p.316). This research has significance for this thesis, as this is an example of spiritual practices within early childhood education and care settings underpinned by contrasting philosophical beliefs. Where teachers' comments were represented it is clear they relate practice to spiritual experiences, which is embedded in the curriculum (Ministry of Education, 1996).

In later writing, Bone (2008a) argues the importance of connectedness in pedagogical practice and between children. Her spirituality definition (Bone, 2008b) is presented earlier in the chapter, in Table 2.1. She identifies three spiritual concepts, first the concept of "spiritual witness" (p.343), described as "...a relational space that happens between people who often describe feeling a strong sense of connection to others" (Bone, 2008a, p.354). The coming together of the individual with others which might include the supportiveness of the practitioner and peers in the learning process within Vygotsky's (1978) zone of proximal development. Second, the concept of spiritual in-betweenness, described as "...a space that is constructed in certain environments and supported by specific rituals and seasonal events" (Bone, 2008a, p.347). Third, the imaginative activities of children and the content of dreams ensue "...spiritual elsewhere" (Bone, 2008a, p.347). This concept was presented in section 2.4. These activities engage a holistic development approach and incorporate the spirituality of others present in the environment. Essentially, Bone (2008a) outlines how her spirituality linked to others and this is a key point for personal consideration within this thesis in respect of positionality. Fundamentally a further objective of this research is to critically evaluate what promoting children's spiritual development looks like in everyday practice through the lenses of practitioners and the parents of young children accessing early years provision.

In the context of the revised Te Whāriki curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2017) Greenfield (2018) researched teachers' perspectives of spirituality. Data was collected through an "open-ended questionnaire" (Greenfield, 2018, p.281) completed by twenty-four respondents. One finding reflects the teachers

experiences of studying spiritual development and suggests their views of spirituality were underpinned by "...their own personal experiences and beliefs" (Greenfield, 2018, p.287) rather than training. Greenfield (2018) argues the need for greater coverage of spirituality in teacher training programmes and for professional development opportunities for teachers to continue to explore putting spiritual principles into practice that form part of the vision of Te Whāriki (Ministry of Education, 2017). In the next section, the focus returns to England to empirical studies and the policy concerns already expressed in literature.

2.6 Policy concerns in England – the erosion of promoting spiritual development in early childhood education

The policy erosion in the context of nurturing spirituality within the EYFS (DfE, 2014a; 2012) is also a concern of Goodliff (2016; 2013), Dowling (2014) and McVittie (2013). McVittie's (2013) analysis of the wording of the 2012 statutory early years framework identifies implicit references and reminds practitioners of the everyday aspect of spirituality. Adams et al. (2016, p.1) also argue spirituality is an "...implicit component in the early years curricula of England" and substantiate this with reference to the components of the early years framework such as "...self-awareness/uniqueness and relationships" (p.2). They also debate issues surrounding attempting to universally define spiritual development and conclude they consider this as not achievable, while suggesting more research is needed to inform policy and practice (Adams et al., 2016).

A concern raised by Adams et al. (2015) is the decrease in preparing trainee teachers to gain an understanding of how to promote spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Phase one of their research was conducted through an online survey of twenty questions, with an aim to question how trainers approach the teaching of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development with trainee teachers and their viewpoint on "...the place of SMSC in primary schools" (Adams et al., 2015, p.199). In this national survey, out of one hundred and twelve providers, thirty-one surveys were completed (Adams et al., 2015). The findings suggest these aspects of development are not taught separately and Adams et al. (2015, p.213) conclude "...it appears to have a low

profile in England's ITT provision compared to other subjects". A key issue raised by Adams et al. (2015) is the loss of focus of children's holistic development within a curriculum with "standardised testing" (p.199), when there should be space to also include the well-being of the child. Therefore, maintaining the focus on spiritual development for this thesis, as it is legislated in England to promote this area of development within compulsory education (HMSO, 2002), it is questionable if trainee teachers will be in the same position as some of the teachers in the 1990s in the conundrum of not knowing what this means (Nye and Hay, 1996). Currently there is an expectation for teachers to promote fundamental British values within SMSC (DfE, 2014b) development.

The legislation underpinning the promotion of British values in education is discussed further in the context of ECE in the policy analysis of Chapter 4. However, Nutbrown (2012, p.40) argues "Educating and caring for young children involves both theory and practice", taking into consideration the findings of Adams et al. (2015) it leads to question whether promoting spiritual development is embedded in training for early childhood education practitioners in England. Thereby, an objective of this thesis is to scrutinise the position of promoting young children's spiritual development in early education and childcare practitioner training.

Research conducted by Goodliff (2013) focused on spirituality and creativity in a case study in an English nursery with twenty children aged two to three years. The ethnographic research was led by the question "How do young children aged two and three years express spirituality?" (Goodliff, 2013, p.1067) and the research findings suggest this is "...multi-dimensional" (p.1067). The focused observations, reported in vignettes of three children, revealed the engagement of imaginary play and creativity (Goodliff, 2013). Whilst Goodliff (2013) questioned at the time the absence of a spiritual dimension within the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (DfE, 2012), she additionally argues for the recognition of the importance of the "...spiritual dimension to well-being and creativity – as acknowledged in the Welsh Framework" (p.1068). Goodliff's (2013) study clearly focuses on what was observed during the activities of the children, a finding of significance to this thesis also is the

possibility of "...apprehension of the nursery staff" (p.1060). This appears to be related to the research focus of spirituality, therefore Goodliff (2013) held a meeting with practitioners to "...discuss the notion of spirituality and specifically how it was defined in the project" (p.1060). She had previously researched the views of early childhood practitioners (Goodliff, 2006), when in a survey "...27 out of 30" (Goodliff, 2016, p.74) expressed "...spirituality/spiritual development is not only for children growing up in families with a religious belief". In contrast, when interviewed, the responses were not congruent with this viewpoint as a clear view of linking spiritual development and religion emerged that Goodliff (2016) suggests might have been influenced by two factors. Firstly, by the wording of the curriculum guidance which at the time was the Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage (QCA, 2000). Secondly, uncertainty of how inspectors of early childhood provision at the time "...judged whether children's spiritual development was being fostered appropriately" (Goodliff, 2016, p.74), a point I will expand on in the policy analysis (Chapter 4).

Therefore, the findings of Goodliff's (2006) survey have implications for this thesis as the promotion of spiritual development within early years practice was explicitly stated in policy documents. It was also under regulatory gaze when the research was conducted (Goodliff, 2016; 2006). It is questionable then, when and why was the promotion of young children's spiritual development removed from ECE policy documents? It also questions how the EYFS compares to other ECE curricula of the United Kingdom. Therefore, this is examined in the policy analysis of Chapter 4. The following section focuses on research illustrating resources aimed at nurturing spirituality and studies highlighting children's experiences of bereavement.

2.7 Spirituality, bereavement and afterlife

Despite what seems to be a limited range of empirical research on young children's spirituality with child participants, there is published literature and studies that focus on strategies for practitioners to increase their own awareness of different faiths and religions, whilst providing tools for children to explore spiritual concepts (Malcom, 2010; Peyton and Jalongo, 2008). The question of whether spirituality can be separated from religion is a thread

connecting research on spirituality across the life cycle and this indeed contributes to the sensitivity of spirituality research. Peyton and Jalongo (2008) suggest "...understanding and respecting young children's religious backgrounds is an important way of respecting diversity" (p.301). Central to their argument is the holistic philosophy of early childhood education that must include the child's spirituality. To affirm this, Peyton and Jalongo (2008, p.302) argue "...in order to truly know children in all of their complexity, we need to understand their spirituality, whether it is affiliated with an organized religion or not". In addition, a further concern reported by Peyton and Jalongo (2008) is similar to spirituality research as young children's religious faith is not represented in research as strongly as those of adults. Yet, not understanding differences in religious beliefs may have implications for spirituality studies. As Peyton and Jalongo (2008) point out "...some religions believe in a single life with no afterlife, some believe in a single life with an afterlife, and some believe in multiple reincarnations" (p.302). Taking this into account, dependence on the belief of the individual has the capacity to influence the decisions they make in shaping their pathway in life.

Fundamentally, the role of the adult in education to embrace multicultural approaches and to provide resources to promote awareness of different beliefs are advocated by Peyton and Jalongo (2008) through literature and where "...customs, rituals, clothing and symbols" (p.302) can be viewed by children and practitioners together. Communication shared through picture books is the source recommended for practitioners and young children to access this information (Peyton and Jalongo, 2008). Similarly, Malcom's (2010) research focused on the use of picture and storybooks used by parents to explore sensitive issues with their children, such as dying, death and spiritual afterlife. Malcom's (2010) study was based on analysing one hundred and one books available in North America aimed to be read by children aged four to eight years focusing on "...death, dying, grief and bereavement" (p.56). These books included the death of pets, grandparents, parents, children and a generalised approach (Malcom, 2010). A key research finding was less than half of the books, forty-nine, made reference to "...heaven or a spiritual afterlife" (Malcom, 2010, p.56). The pictures and text were analysed by Malcom (2010), out of the

forty-nine books that illustrated some form of afterlife, twenty-one books were more specific in detail of "...where heaven is or where our spirits spend the afterlife" (p.60). Nineteen of these indicated "...we must look up to heaven" (Malcom, 2010, p.60). Books identified by Malcom (2010) in the "...death generalized" (p.59) category, such as "Badger's Parting Gifts" (Varley, 1984) and "Water Bugs and Dragonflies" (Stickney, 1999) are accessible in England, these were analysed as books "with a major emphasis on heaven or a spiritual life" (Malcom, 2010, p.59). Varley's (1984) story does not specifically mention heaven and is described by Malcom (2010) as providing "...the message that a spiritual existence beyond life on earth is a real possibility if not a certainty" (p.58). Malcom's (2010) findings indicate the use of such books in times when families face bereavement and grief, while putting forward the argument "Death is a fact of life" (p.51). Fundamentally, practitioners in a range of professions might have direct contact with families experiencing separation through the death of relatives and friends. Therefore, death may be a topic that is raised by children within an early childhood education setting, and this might be through personal experiences.

Frangoulis et al. (1996) note the three stages children might go through to understand the concept of death, such as "...from none to partial to complete" (p.114). They suggest a two year old child would not "...grasp the essential components of the concept" (Frangoulis et al., 1996, p.114) whereas a four year old "...may know that death means separation but may not realise that it is permanent or that a dead person is unable to see, hear or move" (p.114). They perceive that children are likely to have a greater understanding by the age of nine years (Frangoulis et al., 1996). Their research sought to investigate children's concepts of an afterlife with "one hundred and three children aged five to eight in three London schools" (Frangoulis et al., 1996, p.114) as the child participants. Profoundly, the research findings of Frangoulis et al. (1996) revealed the unease experienced by children when reflecting on their thoughts of heaven. They concluded heaven was not perceived to be a "...fun place; it may be boring or even frightening" (Frangoulis et al., 1996, p.122). Their findings have implications for ECE practice, from the perspective of the response to a question related to the death of a pet or human when connected

to heaven assumes the child has the comprehension of the meaning. Whereas, this comprehension is not always in place. For example, out of the twenty, five-year-old children in the sample, ten children believed in an afterlife and ten children did not (Frangoulis et al., 1996). However, the individual religions of the children were not identified, the children attended one of the three schools "... a Jewish (School A), Church of England (School B) and non-denominational local authority school (School C)" (Frangoulis et al., 1996, p.115). This research revealed from the sample "19% believed in God but denied an afterlife" (Frangoulis et al., 1996, p.122). Whilst, embedded in the research findings is the notion of anxiety experience by some children when confronted with the concept of afterlife.

In the research of Potts (2013) the realism of death faced by children is presented in the statistics as she states "...every 22 minutes in the United Kingdom, a child is bereaved of a parent, 63 children a day and 24,000 a year" (p.95). These statistics do not include grandparents, although Potts (2013) argues this would be a greater number than parents. Potts (2013) explicitly argues "...children in the younger age ranges are the least supported following a bereavement" (p.98) as she justifies selecting Key Stage 1 teachers as the research participants particularly as they work with some children aged five. The argument put forward by Potts (2013) challenges the statement "...least said, soonest mended" (p.98) and the myth "...very young children are not impacted by grief because of their emotional immaturity" (Potts, 2013, p.98). A key point raised by Potts (2013) is a reminder that when well-being and happiness is attempted to be measured, and policies propose this, it must be considered that some children may be experiencing bereavement. Therefore, she argues for the need to provide effective strategies to support children who are bereaved.

Another issue identified by Potts (2013) is the barrier of the "medicalisation of bereavement" (p.104), discussed in the context of school nurses supporting bereaved children as a strategy to support emotional well-being. Potts (2013) challenges strategies "...where the inclination to pathologise grief conveniently absolves other professions of responsibility" (p.104). Central to the research of

Potts (2013) is a proposal for policy changes to include provision in teacher training to equip forthcoming teachers to understand the “impact of bereavement” (p.105) to support pupils in the school environment. This proposal is also relevant for ECE practitioners to support children within early years settings.

The research studies of Potts (2013), Malcom (2010), Peyton and Jalongo (2008) and Frangoulis et al. (1996) are significant to this thesis as they identify the continuum of children’s spirituality, when the spiritual potential of celebrating life (King, 2013) is challenged through the opposing spectrum of trauma and at times the unexpected ending of life. Even though spirituality is often connected to positive experiences manifesting in joy and happiness it is clear from the research of Potts (2013), Malcom (2010), Peyton and Jalongo (2008) and Frangoulis et al. (1996) the experiences of death and bereavement have the capacity to evoke existential questions.

Hill’s (2015) multiple case-study research illustrates young children, aged four and five years, “developing working theories about death and dying” (p.234). In classroom-based video recorded observations, a “Dead Forever game” (Hill, 2015, p.166) emerged. In their play, the children demonstrated awareness of the permanence of death and the possibility of a temporary state “from which it is possible to come back to life” (Hill, 2015, p.166). The latter refers to the children’s awareness of resuscitation. In a further conversation, the children began to debate heaven and whether skeletons stay on earth. A point also raised in this research is the notion that fairy tales often portray death as temporary, a person asleep and woken by a kiss. Hill’s (2015) research raises awareness to the knowledge of death and dying that young children accumulate and integrate into play and within conversations with peers, within the presence of the teacher. To conclude this chapter the next section draws awareness to some of the gaps of knowledge in the spiritual discourse.

2.8 Gaps in knowledge

The relevance of nurturing young children’s spirituality is embedded in the reviewed literature. Research conducted in the past in England, with teachers

and early childhood education practitioners as participants explored what spirituality means in practice when promoting spiritual development was explicit in policy. However, in this context parents' perspectives of spirituality appear to be missing from the spiritual discourse, which indicates a gap in knowledge (Hart, 1998). A further gap is identified regarding policy, policy concerns are represented in the literature (Adams et al., 2016; Goodliff, 2016; 2013; McVittie, 2013), suggesting the need to further explore the significant reduction of explicit reference to the spiritual dimension in the early childhood education policy context. Furthermore, reduce space is reported to be given to studying what 'spiritual' means in teacher training programmes (Adams et al., 2015). Therefore, the final objective of this thesis is to research what spirituality means to practitioners and the parents of young children in a range of early years provision within the context of the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (DfE, 2014a).

The development of the research questions designed to explore the research objectives, the methodology and research methods are presented in the next chapter.

Chapter 3 Methodology and Methods

3.1 Introduction

The sensitivity of researching spiritual beliefs suggested by Hay and Nye (2006) and a political discourse extends throughout the methodological framework scaffolded by ethical considerations (BERA, 2011), located in an outsider researcher position (Wellington, 2015; Alderson and Morrow, 2011; Robson, 2011). Pillow (2003) proposes "...embedded within the research process are relationships of power that all researchers must face" (p.182); this relates to the position of the researcher whether an insider or outsider of the research environment. Consequently, due to my position of teaching in higher education throughout the planning stages of the research, and during the data collection, action research inside a setting or an ethnographic approach of becoming an insider was not feasible due to professionally working outside of early years provision (Wellington, 2015; Robson, 2011). However, the outsider researcher also becomes the insider in their research and must avoid treating participants as outsiders through establishing respectful and trusting relationships (BERA, 2011). In the context of early childhood studies, the researcher must uphold early childhood education professional values (British Association for Early Childhood Education, 2011).

Furthermore, the necessity to incorporate reflexivity is integral to research with human participants (Wellington, 2015; Mosselson, 2010; Rallis and Rossman, 2010; Pillow, 2003). Therefore, in this chapter I reflect on research literature which provided guidance and illuminated pitfalls, in the same way I also report the strategies used to address issues arising in the research process (Wellington, 2015; Robson, 2011; Sikes, 2004). Justification of the decisions surrounding the formation of the research questions and the selection of the research methods include why the chosen methods are perceived to be "...fit for the purpose of the research" (BERA, 2011, p.9), whereas other methods were excluded (Wellington, 2015; Punch, 2014; Robson, 2011; Wellington and Szczerbinski, 2007). Alongside this, elucidation of the ethical framework structuring the pathway to conduct this "educational research" (Pring, 2015,

p.21) illustrates the necessity for ethical consideration to be effective before, during and after the completion of the study (Wellington, 2015; Denscombe, 2014; Graham et al., 2013; BERA, 2011).

3.2 The research design

The ethical guidelines of the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2011) underpin the research design, which obtained ethical approval through the ethics review process of the University of Sheffield School of Education (Appendix 1 and Appendix 2). The research design is led by the concept of the combination of the binary of policy encompassed in the cultural factors of the macrosystem and the proposal of "...activity, role and interpersonal relations" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p.22) in each setting of the microsystem, with the combination of the home and early years settings influencing the developing child in the mesosystem. Thus, the research incorporates at least two social and cultural environments familiar to children attending early years provision and their families (Rogoff, 2003; Bronfenbrenner, 1986;1979; Vygotsky, 1978), in contrast to a two-way approach of research with the researcher, who would be a stranger as an outsider researcher and the child (Bronfenbrenner and Mahoney, 1975). Conversely, although the focus of the research is young children's spirituality there are no child participants, as this research aims to explore what spirituality means in the context of practice which includes policy interpretation (Wood, 2017). Furthermore, there is no intention in the research design to covertly observe children or to assess their spiritual development (Wellington, 2015; Alderson and Morrow, 2011). In addition, historical discourse analysis of early childhood education policy from the past to present is integrated in the study in order to unearth the position of young children's spirituality in England (Foucault, 2002a).

According to Yin (2014) the research design requires a "...logical sequence that connects the empirical data to a study's initial research questions and, ultimately, to its conclusions" (p.28). Primarily, in the early planning stage the research questions started to emerge before the selection of methodology and research methods for the study while researching consultation documents and proposed changes to early childhood education policies (DfE, 2012; Nutbrown,

2012; DfE, 2011), during Part 1 of the Doctor of Education programme. I also gained access to a wider range of peer-reviewed journals focused on children's spirituality than previously accessed (Wellington, 2015). Hence, these draft research questions shaped the parameters of the study (Wellington, 2015; O'Leary, 2014; Bassey, 1999; Stake, 1995). However, these questions required refinement after reflecting on ontological and epistemological assumptions (Crotty, 1998). At first, I engaged in a "pragmatic approach" (Punch, 2014, p.17) that evolved into a social constructionist "paradigm-driven approach" (Punch, 2014, p.17) which takes account of social and historical underpinnings, informed by an interpretivist epistemology and ontology in a case-study approach (Wellington, 2015; Denzin and Lincoln, 2011; Crotty, 1998).

Crotty (1998) argues for the importance of culture and community in meaning making and its role in social constructivism, suggesting in the natural world for example when viewing a sunset, "...it is our culture that teaches us how to see them – and in some cases whether to see them" (p.55). Subsequently, to explore the meaning of spirituality through the lenses of practitioner and parent participants, I planned to gather qualitative data (Bazeley, 2013) in an interpretivist paradigm, underpinned by the proposed criteria of constructionism of Denzin and Lincoln (2011) including "...trustworthiness, credibility, transferability, confirmability" (p.13). Thereby, the research is encapsulated in a case study, based on one subject or unit of analysis (Wellington, 2015), specifically, young children's spirituality. Furthermore, this could also be categorised as an "...instrumental case study" (Stake, 1995, p.3) as it aims to be instrumental to learning what spirituality means to the participants in the context of contemporary early years practice (DfE, 2014a). Therefore, the methods selected for the data collection were semi-structured interviews with all the participants, with an option to bring an artefact related to their definition of spirituality, diaries to record spiritually focused practice by the practitioners, and early childhood education policy scrutiny. These methods will be discussed later in this chapter. An interpretive paradigm raises issues of subjectivity and non-generalisability as the sampling, of ten participants, is significantly smaller than if a positivist paradigm had been selected (Punch, 2014; Denzin and Lincoln, 2011; Robson, 2011). Additionally, combined in the research strategy

are phenomenological elements, to research the lived experiences of the participants sharing their understanding of children's spirituality (O'Leary, 2014).

Mosselson (2010) argues the need for reflexivity in qualitative research approaches describing this "...as an important ethical tool" (p.493) utilised throughout the research process. In addition, Rallis and Rossman (2010) propose the importance of "...caring reflexivity" (p.498) which is fostered by the connectedness between the researcher and the participants, whilst it is a priority to protect the well-being of all the participants from any harm and to reduce intrusion (Denscombe, 2014; BERA, 2011). For example, Robson (2011) highlights "...emotional ante is raised for all concerned when sensitive topics are the focus of the study" (p.400). Therefore, due to the sensitivity of the research and the priority of maintaining the participants' well-being, in advance of the data collection I researched a range of local counselling services, including bereavement support, to be able to recommend should this situation arise (University of Sheffield School of Education, 2016). Similarly, the well-being of all the children and other people within the research space not participating in the research were also paramount.

3.3 The research questions

The overarching purpose of this research was to investigate what spirituality means to early childhood education practitioners who plan activities and care for children aged up to five years attending early years provision in England, and to the parents of the children volunteering to participate in the research. Consequently, this study aims to make a "...further contribution" (Wellington, 2015, p. 56) to research on young children's spirituality with the anticipation of influencing policy and practice development. Therefore, the research objectives and research questions needed to be established to approach this under-researched topic (Rose and Gilbert, 2017; Goodliff, 2016; Adams et al., 2015; David et al., 2003). Nevertheless, the research questions leading this thesis required modification when the research changed focus from including practitioners engaged with the four early childhood education frameworks of the United Kingdom (Appendix 1) to be based solely in England (Appendix 2) and to include parent participants (Wellington, 2015; O'Leary, 2014; Bassegy, 1999).

These research questions are linked to six research objectives, presented in Appendix 3. As stated in Chapter 1, the primary question leading the study is:

- What does spirituality mean to practitioners and parents of young children in contemporary early years practice within the Early Years Foundation Stage of England?

The four secondary questions are:

- How do practitioners and parents of young children define spirituality?
- What does provision for promoting spiritual development look like in everyday practice?
- What is the relevance of promoting spiritual development in contemporary early years practice in England?
- To what extent does the promotion of young children's spiritual development exist in early education and childcare qualification training?

These research questions are also presented to demonstrate how they connect to the field questions for practitioners in Appendix 4 and for parents in Appendix 5.

3.4 Negotiating access

Sikes (2004) proposes that "...traditionally accounts of research make the process appear to be neat and unproblematic" (p.31) and highlights the importance of acknowledging any arising issues to maintain an ethical approach. Consequently, as issues present in the practice of research, ethical solutions need to be found and justified within the construct of the reflexive process (Wellington, 2015; Mosselson, 2010; Rallis and Rossman, 2010; Sikes, 2004). As stated in Chapter 1 the research was originally planned within a UK context (Appendix 1). During the pilot study I visited an early years setting in England where a practitioner volunteered to take part in the research and access was granted by the manager. Meanwhile, contacting settings by telephone and email beyond England without having established firm "connections" (Robson, 2011, p.401) in the past yielded no further participants.

Subsequently, the study required refocusing (Robson, 2011), therefore modifications led to a specific focus on the position of young children's spirituality in England, which incorporates practice underpinned by the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (DfE, 2014a).

In response to the analysis of the data collected through interviews with the first participant in England I returned to the first pilot study data. Parent partnership and the key person role (Elfer et al., 2012; Brooker, 2010), was strongly represented in the pilot data and I had found no studies in England that reported parents' views of nurturing spirituality. These factors suggested the research modification should continue to seek practitioners working in the EYFS, and to include a parental lens. I introduced the key person role of the practitioner in Chapter I, it is outlined by the Department for Education and aims to "...help ensure that every child's care is tailored to meet their individual needs...to help the child become familiar with the setting, offer a settled relationship for the child and build a relationship with their parents" (DfE, 2014,p.21). Thus, triangulated attachment relationships are fostered between the child, parents and practitioner (Elfer et al., 2012). Ethical approval was given to invite parents of children accessing early years provision to participate in the research (Appendix 2).

Fundamentally, participants can withdraw from the research at any time, without providing a reason, a right that was explained in the participant information sheets for the practitioners (Appendix 6) and parents (Appendix 7). This was also stated on the research consent forms (Appendix 8 for practitioners; Appendix 9 for parents) to obtain "voluntary informed consent" (BERA, 2011, p.5). The changes took place after the data collection had commenced in England with the first participant, a second participant was pending signing a consent form and attending the first interview. Therefore, I returned to the first and potential second participants to explain the research modifications and they both agreed to continue participating in the research.

Once ethical approval was granted for the research to be based in England (Appendix 2) a proposed accessible purposive sampling list was drawn-up of

potential participants with the intention to recruit a maximum of eight practitioner participants working in a range of EYFS settings (Wellington, 2015; Punch, 2014; O’Leary, 2005). This “handpicked” (O’Leary, 2005, p.94) sample was based on contacting professionals in management roles first, with an aim to provide credibility rather than convenience (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). This strategy further enabled the disseminating of the research outline to be shared within the settings with practitioners and parents to yield volunteers and ruled out “snowball sampling” (O’Leary, 2005, p.94) to maintain confidentiality. Primarily, permission to access potential research participants was granted by the relevant authorities of the early years provision who hold the position of power whether or not to let the outsider researcher proceed (Wellington, 2015; Denscombe, 2014; Robson, 2011; Pillow, 2003). In addition, two practitioner participants opted-in following contact outside of their workplaces and were granted permission in their settings to record the diaries.

Communication, which was key to access potential participants commenced by telephone, followed by email exchanges and a face-to-face meeting. Consequently, recruitment became staggered to allow time for potential participants to decide whether to opt in (Wellington, 2015; BERA, 2011; Robson, 2011; Opie 2004). To contextualise this in relation to the time scale of the study I have outlined this in Table 3.1, which illustrates the chronology of the Ethics Review applications, pilot studies and the fieldwork (Wolcott, 2009).

Table 3.1 The time frame of the research from seeking ethical approval to completion of the fieldwork

Ethics Review Applications and Fieldwork	Date
Ethics Review application 1	June 2015
Ethical approval 1 - confirmed	July 2015
Practitioner pilot study	September 2015
Series of interviews with first practitioner participant	October 2015 – January 2016
Ethics Review application 2	February 2016
Ethical approval 2 - confirmed	February 2016
Series of interviews with five practitioner participants	March 2016 – January 2017
Parent pilot study	October 2016
Interviews with parents	January – March 2017

The data collection period with each practitioner from the first to the third interview was scheduled to take at least three months. Consequently, this extended due to the time to negotiate access and became dependent on the availability of the participant alongside the schedule of the provision. To access parents, managers of some of the settings forwarded information of the research with my contact details to parents of the children in the settings, parents could then independently seek more information.

3.5 The research participants

The plan to recruit up to eight practitioners to participate in the research from a range of provision provided flexibility to reduce the number depending on how many parents volunteered to participate in the research and to stop collecting data when the “saturation point” (Wellington, 2015, p.264) was perceived to have been reached. This strategy was twofold in scope, firstly it incorporated depth by seeking individual perspectives rather than group responses. Secondly, early years provision is diverse in England, Roberts-Holmes (2012) highlights “...a continuing structural ‘split’” (p.31) between the PVI sector and differences such as staff qualifications in the maintained sector. I aimed to integrate breadth to embrace the diversity of early years provision in England rather than focusing on a single setting (Wood, 2017; DfE, 2014a; Roberts-Holmes, 2012).

The early years workforce in England is also described by Nutbrown (2012, p.3) as “diverse”, however it is predominantly female. O’Leary (2014) notes sensitivity to inclusivity and diversity is essential throughout the research process. In the sample of this small-scale research, male viewpoints are not represented because only females responded to the invitation to participate. Six practitioners, Alice, Anne, Judith, Kate, Ruth and Valerie (pseudonyms), as well as four parents, Alexandra, April, Jay and Natalie (pseudonyms) volunteered to participate in the research. Lahman et al. (2015) report the sensitivity and responsibility of allocating research pseudonyms, and the bereavement-focused research of Scarth (2016) affirms this in the context of sensitive qualitative studies. An alphanumerical system in the early stages of the research was applied until a replacement name was selected by each

participant (Allen and Wiles, 2016; Lahman et al., 2015). The participants suggested their own pseudonyms and were aware of the right to request the use of their real name (BERA, 2011). I had prepared a list of possible names for participants to support the pseudonym selection process, however this was not used (Allen and Wiles, 2016). The pseudonyms were recorded on all the research materials to avoid linking “respondents to their responses” (Allen and Wiles, 2016, p.151), to maintain the confidentiality of personal information and information disclosed in interview question responses (Wellington, 2015; BERA, 2011).

This sample included practitioners who had been working in the early years field for four years, to those with over twenty-five years of experience. The six practitioners worked in different settings, within the maintained sector and PVI sector, where practice was underpinned by the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (DfE, 2014a). They all worked “directly with children” (DfE, 2014a, p.22) and three practitioners also had management responsibilities. The early years provision included one setting for children aged three to four years attached to a primary school and a setting for children aged four to five years located in another primary school. Along with four settings for children aged under three to five years, three of these provided full day care and one sessional care. One of these settings integrated a Montessori approach with the EYFS (DfE, 2014a). None of the settings were identified as faith-based.

When planning the research, I intended to report the roles of the practitioners next to their pseudonyms, during the data collection this changed due to the risk of identification through their specific roles in the settings. Hence, the roles and qualifications of the participants will not be presented next to their pseudonyms (Allen and Wiles, 2016; Robson, 2011). Within the early years workforce of England, practitioners hold a range of early education and childcare qualifications (Nutbrown, 2012). The group setting requirements of the EYFS (DfE, 2014a) at the time of the data collection stipulated the manager “...must hold at least a full and relevant level 3 qualification and at least half of all other staff must hold at least a full and relevant level 2 qualification” (p. 20). In this

research, the practitioners' highest qualifications range from level 5 to 7 (DfE, 2017b). These qualifications were revealed in the first interview, all of the practitioners had studied early childhood education in the United Kingdom, this had taken place in a range of universities, colleges or with training providers. One practitioner initially studied ECE internationally.

The sample also includes parent participants who were familiar with the Early Years Foundation Stage and the length of time they had accessed early years provision for their children ranged from nine months to three years and six months. Their children were in the Early Years Foundation Stage (DfE, 2014a) during the time of the data collection and were aged between eighteen months to five years. I was unaware of the spiritual, "religious or philosophical" (HMSO, 2010a, p.6) beliefs of the participants in advance of the interviews. Personal information, for example the age and religious background or affiliation of the participants, was only revealed if elected to by the participants within the meetings and interviews. Two participants indicated that English was not their first language when volunteering to participate in the study and all the participants engaged in respondent validation of their transcripts as described in sections 3.7 and 3.11 of this chapter.

3.6 Pilot studies

Two pilot studies, to trial the drafted key field questions were conducted. The first was with three qualified early childhood education practitioners working in early years settings with children up to the age of five years, where practice was underpinned by the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (DfE, 2014a). The second was with a parent of a young child. I aimed to trial the field questions, to establish the clarity and comprehension of the questions and to time the interviews to suggest realistic time parameters for the research participants to enable them to negotiate the time of their interviews (Wellington, 2015; Denscombe, 2014). The pilot studies indicated the questions were answerable, although the diary was not piloted, while the pilot study feedback suggested this was perceived to be an effective method to capture practice (Bartlett and Milligan, 2015). According to Denscombe (2014) "The good interviewer is adept at using probes" (p. 192) so I also noted possible probing questions that might be used in response to the interview questions.

Fundamentally, a key point argued by O’Leary (2014) echoed throughout the interviews, “...it is your interviewees’ voice that you are seeking, and it is their voice that needs to be drawn out” (p.217). The first pilot study confirmed the disadvantage of note-taking as a method, this posed the potential risk of not fully capturing the depth of information being shared (Bazeley, 2013). However, it allowed the practising of note-taking as a recording method, which might be required in the event of any recording equipment issues or if permission to audio record is declined. Further disadvantages of note-taking as the only method of recording experienced in the pilot interviews were the reduction of maintaining eye contact with the interviewee, the observation of non-verbal communication and recording the silences or pauses (Denscombe, 2014).

3.7 The planning of the interviews

A series of interviews was planned with the practitioners and a single interview with the parents taking part in the research as demonstrated in Figure 3.2.

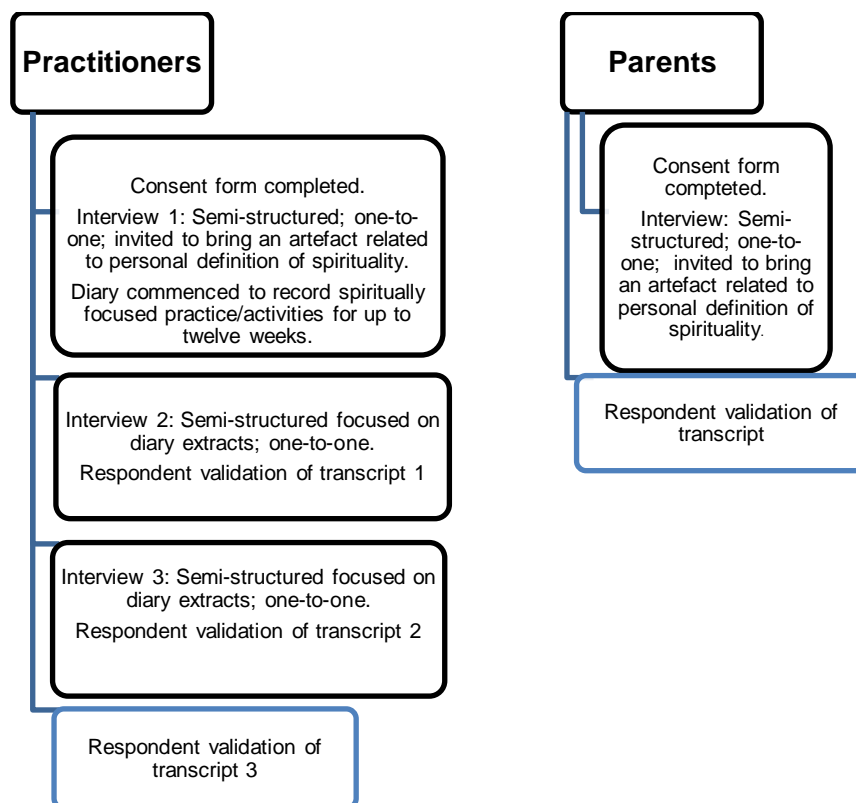


Figure 3.2 An outline of the research design - demonstrating the procedures

The first interview with practitioners and the only interview with the parents were designed to be a one-to-one semi-structured interview to take place either face-to-face, by telephone or via Skype and audio recorded with permission (Denscombe, 2014; Hammond and Wellington, 2013). Prior to this interview, the research consent form was completed and signed, this included reminding the participant of their right to decline to answer a question, their right to decline to be audio recorded and to request at any time for the digital recorder to be switched off (Denscombe, 2014; BERA, 2011). Informed consent is ongoing throughout the research process, therefore before the second and third interviews consent to audio record was revisited verbally (Denscombe, 2014: BERA, 2011). Participants were thanked at the end of every interview for giving their time and for participating in the research (Wellington, 2015).

Opie (2004) suggests that an advantage of the semi-structured interview is that it has the capacity to "...impose an overall shape to the interview" (p.118) which allows for flexibility. The piloted open questions were presented in an interview schedule (Wellington, 2015), these drafted key questions were shared up to a week in advance of the interview with the interviewees. This strategy allowed structure and flexibility for participants to prepare responses if they wanted to (Clough and Nutbrown, 2012). Wellington (2015) argues for the importance of demonstrating the connectedness of the research questions and the interview or questions to be used in the field, the mapping of the drafted questions for the practitioners is presented in Appendix 4 and the parent questions in Appendix 5.

From an ontological perspective, this research method aimed to obtain individual perspectives in a confidential space, to observe the sensitivity of the subject (Robson, 2011). Consequently, the primary research method of semi-structured interviews aimed to capture deep and meaningful "...rich descriptions" (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011, p.9) and research methods yielding group responses, such as focus groups were eliminated (O'Leary, 2014). The time and place of the interviews were mutually negotiated and up to one hour was planned for each interview. In the majority these took place in the early years settings as this was a familiar environment for the participants (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Conversely, this restricted opportunities to prepare the

interview space in advance of the interview (Wellington, 2015). Hence, prior to the start of every interview I checked with each participant that they were comfortable with the seating and made changes accordingly. Two participants selected off-site settings and one participant chose a telephone interview.

Denscombe (2014) proposes "...what is said during the interview can be taken as material that is both 'on record' and 'for the record'" (p.184). However, these responses are triggered by the questions of the researcher and generate data (Wellington, 2015; Denscombe, 2014; Punch, 2014; O'Leary, 2014; Bazeley, 2013). First, this indicates the importance of listening to the interviewee and acknowledging when a request to remove a word or statement from the interview record is identified during the interview. I recorded these requests in the field notes. Second, the importance of the return of the transcript to the interviewee for "respondent validation" (Wellington, 2015, p.152). Subsequently, the interview transcript was read by the interviewee in a follow-up meeting and checked for accuracy. Any changes were written on the paper copy of the transcript by the participant and I amended the original transcript accordingly before analysing the data (Bazeley, 2013). Wellington (2015, p.153) proposes the disadvantage of recording interviews using note-taking is "recorder bias". The telephone interview required note-taking and the notes were read back to the participant. A follow-up telephone conversation allowed for the complete transcript to be read to the participant to check the interview record was accurate, to gain respondent validation.

3.8 The purpose of the artefacts

All the participants were invited to bring an artefact related to their definition of spirituality to the first interview, this was stated in the research participant information sheets. The term 'artefact' is open to interpretation and provided scope to include visual images such as photographs or objects that have the potential to generate visual data (Silverman, 2014; Prosser, 2011). In the broader sense, an artefact may have many meanings to the owner including cultural and generational connectedness (Pahl and Pollard, 2010). These may have childhood and attachment connections surrounded by memories (Winnicott, 1964). Alternatively, they may possess an "essence" (Hood and

Bloom, 2008, p.461) perceived to be an unseen property associated with the object, thereby making it unique to the person. Moreover, the choice of what or if to bring an artefact to the interview aimed to empower the interviewee to lead the interview dialogue beyond the initial context planned questions of the interview (Wellington, 2015). I invited the participants to discuss the artefact's connection to their definition of spirituality, this afforded progression into how this definition applies in early years practice.

3.9 Diaries recorded by practitioner participants

A single interview with a practitioner relies on recalling experience from the past, whereas a series of interviews combined with keeping a diary to record any spiritually focused practice or activities for twelve weeks, extended the scope to reflect on current practice (Bartlett and Milligan, 2015; Boyce, 1949). Boyce (1949) illustrates how "...valuable information" (p.7) was captured in diary extracts recorded by teachers in practice between 1933-1936 to review activities. In convergence, Wellington (2015) proposes "...diaries can be an excellent additional source of data and provide the informants' own versions or interpretations of events" (p.220). Consequently, an interview schedule was not designed for the practitioner second and third interviews and the length of the interview became dependent on the amount of diary entries, if any, the participant chose to reveal (Wellington, 2015). Therefore, the purpose of the diary was to equip the participants to identify examples of their current practice within a spiritual focus (Bartlett and Milligan, 2015; Wellington, 2015).

This method was chosen instead of researcher observations to reduce researcher subjectivity as O'Leary (2014) describes the existence of researcher "...inherent biases" (p.232) and proposes "...your history, interests, experiences, and expectations – can colour observations" (p.232). Additionally, I aimed to reduce interruption to the children's activities and learning.

Therefore, this "solicited diary" (Bartlett and Milligan, 2015, p.5) method initiated by me aimed to yield a form of documentary evidence that is not classed as "...pre-existing" (Wellington, 2015, p. 219). The advantage of this research method advocated by Bartlett and Milligan (2015) is a diary "...can capture rich data on personal events, motives, feelings and beliefs in an unobtrusive way

and over a period of time” (p.2). Conversely, this participatory approach has reported disadvantages and is not without ethical issues; for example, keeping a diary for any length of time requires commitment and motivation, and the intention was not to increase the workload of the participant (Wellington, 2015; Robson, 2011).

In this study, a further consideration was that practitioners in early years settings work in a team alongside other practitioners in a shared space (DfE, 2014a; Nutbrown, 2012). Therefore, I planned for each participant to select the format of recording their own diary, while aware that the range of presenting the entries could include written, visual or audio entries (Bartlett and Milligan, 2015; Alaszewski, 2006). Because issues over diary ownership can evolve (Bartlett and Milligan, 2015; Wellington, 2015; Alaszewski, 2006), it was established at the first meeting that each participant owned their own diary, the focus was on their practice and I would not remove the diary from their possession. This was essential, particularly as in early years practice formative and summative assessment is based on observations and this includes recording visual images of photographic evidence (DfE, 2014a). Predominantly, I was mindful practitioners must “...protect the privacy of the children in their care” (DfE, 2014a, p.29), consequently if participants use photographs of practice with children engaged in activities, this and the recording of children’s names in the diary identifies the children. As a result, I made an ethical decision that if this was the format chosen by a participant, the diary should remain under their care in the setting. Hence, this could be categorised as an adapted diary-interview method as the diary was not removed from the diarist to be analysed (Alaszewski, 2006). Therefore, the key purpose of the second and third interviews was to capture the diary data for analysis in the words of the diarist (Bartlett and Milligan, 2015; Wellington, 2015; Alaszewski, 2006).

3.10 Research journal and field notes

Robson (2011) advocates the importance of the researcher collating a research journal to document all aspects of planning and conducting the research. In addition, field notes were documented during the data collection, which included recording any interruptions that occurred in an interview, the reveal and

handling of the artefacts, also the format of the practice diaries to contextualise the data (Bazeley, 2013; Robson, 2011). A disadvantage of these handwritten notes is that at some stage they require transcription to be used in the data analysis (Bazeley, 2013). Nevertheless, the research journal and field notes also provided a space for reflection to consider the next steps of the research, whilst providing a reflexive tool to manage the research process (Wellington, 2015; Robson, 2011).

3.11 Transcription of audio recorded interviews

In total, there were twenty-two interviews, twenty-one face-to-face interviews were audio recorded. One telephone interview was recorded by note-taking, as previously stated the notes were read back to the interviewee throughout the interview and were validated in a follow-up telephone conversation. I transcribed the audio recordings verbatim and pauses were also noted, a printed transcript was read, and validated by the interviewee (Wellington, 2015; Denscombe, 2014; Bazeley, 2013). Following this, amendments requested by participants to the transcript were recorded before line numbering was applied to the electronic copy to be used in the data analysis (Denscombe, 2014). One advantage of transcribing is the contribution it makes to the data analysis, in contrast a disadvantage might be perceived due to the time it takes to transcribe, even when the recording is of a high quality (Bazeley, 2013). On average it took six hours to transcribe up to one hour of recording.

Bazeley (2013) discusses the advantage of self-transcribing and argues how the value is "...building intimate knowledge of your data" (p.73). This iterative process of hearing and reading the words repeatedly provides immersion in the data at this stage of the data analysis (Wellington, 2015). At times, I also returned to the field notes, as I made brief notes throughout the interview period, these noted sound disturbances and any interruptions. Strategies were also used to protect participant identity, as a person can be identified by their voice (Bazeley, 2013). The digital audio recordings were not accessible or heard by others, due to the storage of the recording device in a locked storage cabinet, as well as transcribing taking place privately and these are not

planned to be used for any other purpose (Wellington, 2015; BERA, 2011; TSO, 1998).

3.12 Confidentiality and anonymity

In acknowledgement of the sensitive category of researching spiritual beliefs confidentiality and anonymisation strategies were key ethical considerations (University of Sheffield School of Education, 2016). The British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2011) propose that it is the responsibility of the researcher to "...recognize the participants' entitlement to privacy and must accord them their rights to confidentiality and anonymity" (p.7). However, researchers also must respect the participants' rights where they "...waive that right" (BERA, 2011, p.7). Pertinent to this study is "...sensitive personal data means personal data consisting of information as to...(c) his religious beliefs or other beliefs of a similar nature" (TSO, 1998, p.3). Furthermore, the essentiality of obtaining the consent of processing sensitive data is underpinned by Schedule 3 of the Data Protection Act 1998 where it states, "The data subject has given his explicit consent to the processing of the personal data" (TSO, 1998, p.52). This reinforced the need for the participants to validate interview transcripts (Bazeley, 2013).

However, to ensure the participants interests are protected, regarding confidentiality, Denscombe (2014, p.311) suggests that researchers should "...treat all information disclosed to them during research as confidential and not disclose it to other participants or people not connected with the research". A pseudonym replacing each participant's real name aimed to protect their identity and confidentiality. To adhere to this, the strategy of "anonymisation" (Punch, 2014, p.48) applied to all research materials, including the journal and field notes recorded by me and any updated reports of the research shared during supervision meetings. Therefore, all data were anonymised at the earliest point to avoid disclosing any information without the consent of the participant to adhere to the Data Protection Act 1998 (Bazeley, 2013; TSO, 1998).

When using interviews in research Wellington (2015) notes "...every assurance should be made (and later kept, especially when writing up) to preserve the

subject's anonymity and the confidentiality of their responses". In convergence, Allen and Wiles (2016) suggest confidentiality "...is about taking deliberate steps to keep participants' identities secret" (p.151). Keeping the responses confidential required handling and securely storing the data, anonymising the responses and adhering to the consented use of the anonymised data. Hence, no identifiable personal information was recorded on research resources and the data recording the responses to questions yielded by the participants within the planned interviews was treated as strictly confidential (Wellington, 2015; Denscombe, 2014; BERA, 2011).

When promising confidentiality safeguarding children and abiding by legislation must be prioritised, therefore it was essential to inform participants before consenting to take part in the research when the agreement of confidentiality could not be ensured (Graham et al., 2013; BERA, 2011). Therefore, if at any time a concern regarding the protection of children or a child's well-being was at risk, in consultation with the supervisor, disclosure of information would be reported to "...appropriate authorities" (BERA, 2011, p. 8) to comply with designated agencies and legislation, for example the safeguarding and welfare statutory requirements of the EYFS (DfE, 2014a), the Children Act 2004 (HMSO, 2004a) and the Childcare Act 2006 (HMSO, 2006). Statutory requirements also apply to the researcher, when visiting early years provision, this was by invitation at all stages of the research, to maintain the welfare requirements and safeguarding of the children all visitors sign in and out of the premises and are supervised on site (DfE, 2014a; HMSO, 2006).

Upholding privacy is paramount long-term to maintain confidentiality and anonymity throughout the research process and beyond (Wellington, 2015; BERA, 2011). Therefore, the aim of not identifying participants or the name of the provision, or any real name shared in the interviews through maintaining confidentiality will continue when disseminating the findings in any format, including this thesis (Allen and Wiles, 2016; Graham et al., 2013). The participants were informed on the information sheets that they will receive a summary of the research findings in a leaflet format and the research is aimed to be published in a doctoral thesis. This required further explanation, before

each participant signed the consent form, I explained the thesis must be examined and passed to be published, which is aimed to be available in the University of Sheffield eTheses repository. A point I reiterated in the meetings during the pseudonym selection process. The option of a participant providing permission for the anonymised data to be used in subsequent research was included on the consent forms (University of Sheffield School of Education, 2016; TSO, 1998). However, as informed consent is an ongoing process, this would be revisited if this situation arises in the future, although it is not intended to keep the data indefinitely or to use it for any other purpose (University of Sheffield School of Education, 2016; TSO, 1998).

3.13 Strategies engaged to analyse policy

The reviewed literature of Goodliff (2016; 2013) and McVittie (2013) in Chapter 2 affirms that I am not alone in questioning policy differences regarding children's spirituality, between the pre-compulsory and compulsory education sectors in England (DfE, 2014a; 2013a). Therefore, I conducted a policy text analysis in the planning stage of the research to engage in researching the legislation promoting children's spiritual development overarching education in England since 1944 (Fairclough, 2003). This identified the position of children's spirituality in compulsory education in England, by contrast it became necessary to extend the search to probe documents underpinning the development of early childhood education from a broader perspective (Bacchi, 2009). As a result, the search widened to include historical consultation documents (Foucault, 2002a).

Because they are often developed by multiple authors, policies are complex and open to interpretation (Ball, 1993) and are underpinned by drivers and levers, ideologies and beliefs evolved from local, national and global influences (Rizvi and Lingard, 2010). Bronfenbrenner (1979) refers to the existence of "a blueprint for the organization of every setting" (p.48), while suggesting changes to the blueprint have the capacity to modify settings which ultimately impact on development. Moreover, in the context of early childhood education frameworks Wood (2017) raises awareness to the possibility of policy interpretation differences within diverse early years settings arguing that "...the

principles and characteristics of effective practice that are stated in policy frameworks may be interpreted differently in pre-school and school settings” (p.110). In addition, they may be interpreted differently by inspectors and as these policies are publicly accessible, they may also be interpreted differently by parents accessing early years provision.

On the one hand, interpretation of policy may become evident in the data yielded in the interviews, on the other hand to examine policy backgrounds historical analysis may unearth “discontinuity” (Foucault, 2002a, p.10) to establish if and when any policy erosion occurred. Therefore, the policy analysis planned to focus on identifying shifts that change the position of promoting young children’s spiritual development through “questioning” (Foucault, 2002a, p.6) documents through historical discourse analysis, I aimed to focus both on what was included and excluded in the policies. The policy analysis presented in Chapter 4, correspondingly focuses on legislation, policy frameworks and consultation documents.

3.14 The data analysis framework

All the transcribed data were securely stored in password protected computer files and “back-up copies” (Denscombe, 2014, p.276) were prepared prior to the data analysis. The transcripts were line numbered and space left for coding, references to field notes were noted in the margin, which provided a further opportunity, beyond transcription to immerse in the data (Wellington, 2015; Braun and Clarke, 2006). I decided not to use qualitative analytic software; due to the sensitivity of the data and a manual approach to the analysis was applied (Wellington, 2015). This aimed to reduce the risk of splintering the words of the participants and to maintain verbatim accounts to be presented in a qualitative approach (Wellington, 2015). Thus, using an inductive analysis of the codes generated from the data I identified “natural meaning units” (Bazeley, 2013, p.195), which were labelled by codes to combine into clusters and eventually themes. Some codes did not fit into a cluster resulting in non-clustered codes (Wellington, 2015).

I planned to write notes on, underline and highlight words and phrases on printed copies of the transcripts, containing the anonymised data, using coloured pens to identify emerging codes to manage the data and to begin the search for patterns in a repetitive, iterative and rigorous process (Wellington, 2015; Bazeley, 2013; Braun and Clarke, 2006). This provided the opportunity to cut the data and move it around to begin to name codes, therefore “a posteriori” (Wellington, 2015, p.268) categories emerged from the data. Eventually, the categories of clusters were combined within a mapping process to create themes, consisting of what fitted together and what is different to apply a comparative method approach (Wellington, 2015; Braun and Clarke, 2006). However, the research questions were also referred to throughout the data analysis providing a deductive approach to interrogate the data and to establish saturation, this required returning to literature to question what the data was indicating (Wellington, 2015).

The mapping of the data analysis is presented in Appendix 10, the themes emerging from the data are: Defining spirituality, Spiritual understanding, Spiritually nurturing environments, Spiritual dilemma, Spiritual connectedness, Spiritual enablers, Spiritual barriers, Nurturing spirituality in the EYFS, Spiritual relevance, Position in training.

Having discussed the research design, the next chapter presents the policy and documentary analysis.

Chapter 4 Documentary and Policy Analysis

4.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to locate through documentary and policy analysis the emergence and trends of promoting young children's spiritual development within ECE policy in England. Rizvi and Lingard (2010) propose "...policies exist in context: they have a prior history" (p.15), they may be related to policies pertaining to other disciplines locally, nationally and globally. Internationally children's rights to develop spiritually, and the importance of their spiritual well-being is embedded in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child within Articles 17, 23, 27 and 32 (UNICEF, 1989). An evaluation of how these specific rights transferred into legislation in England published in a policy paper indicates how these rights are met in the context of education (DfE, 2010).

This point will be expanded later in this chapter, as the predominant purpose of the documentary and policy analysis is to locate the extent to which promoting young children's spiritual development has been validated within legislation.

In addition, towards the end of the chapter the position of children's spiritual development in England is contextualised with the three other UK early childhood education and care frameworks. Further to this the "policy effects" (Ball, 1993, p.15), resonating from macro-level policy influencing changes in the care and education of children in early years provision are considered. In order to apply a systematic approach, an analysis framework was developed, this is outlined in the next section.

4.2 An outline of the analysis framework

As previously mentioned in Chapter 1, the promotion of pupils' spiritual development in compulsory education (age 5-16) is firmly rooted in legislation and is overt in the National Curriculum of England (DfE, 2013a; HMSO, 2002). In contrast, the EYFS statutory framework (DfE, 2017a; 2014a; 2012; DCSF, 2008a) differs as there is no specific reference to this aspect of development. To find out whether promoting young children's spiritual development has ever been explicitly included in governmental "strategies" (Rizvi and Lingard, 2010,

p.37) a genealogy approach leads the analysis (Foucault, 2002a). Genealogies, according to Ball (2013, p.34) “are histories of things that are supposed to have no history”. Foucault (2002a, p.6) proposes the concept of “questioning the document”, what is said and unsaid, its position in time, the voices who are speaking and their status and qualification for doing so. Archaeology, is required to find what is already stated or not stated, included or excluded (Foucault, 2002a), discourses within Foucault’s archaeological level expose “rules and regularities” (Ball, 2013, p.5). I was therefore looking for policy shifts, or for what Foucault (2002a) proposes offers history, which is ‘discontinuity’.

The purpose of the historical analysis (Foucault, 2002a) employed in this chapter is to locate spiritual emphasis in education policy specific to early childhood education in England. This relies on accessing archived documents, as well as developing a documentary and policy analysis “toolbox” (Ball, 1993, p.10). Subsequently the documentary search focused on “public documents” (Wellington, 2015, p.212) and did not include policies written within the settings of the participants.

I engaged a preliminary “textual analysis” (Fairclough, 2003, p.16) of the documents to establish if the key words ‘spiritual’ ‘spirituality’ ‘spiritually’ were locatable. A strategy that confirmed ‘spiritual’ is the key word of focus in policy documents, in contrast ‘spirituality’ is not locatable in policy text. Where ‘spiritual’ was present, the scrutiny continued to search backwards to locate the superseded documents to pursue the trail, in the case of legislation this included reading amendments, repeals and omissions. I adapted Rizvi and Lingard’s (2010, p.54-56) “questions for analysis” (presented in Table 4.1) to provide a reflexive analytic framework.

Table 4.1 The policy analysis framework adapted from Rizvi and Lingard's (2010) questions for analysis

Contextual Issues	Policy and Textual Issues	Implementation and Outcome Issues
Where was the policy generated?	What are the leading problems the policy aims to solve?	Who are the implementers of the policy?
How does this policy connect to other documents or policies?	What complementary policies are needed to meet the policy agenda?	Who is the policy target audience?
Who was involved in leading the policy agenda?	Who promotes the policy?	What are the possible consequences or unintentional consequences of the policy?

The objective of the genealogy approach, according to Bacchi (2009, p.10) is to unearth policy “twists and turns” and within the nuances I aimed to identify explicit ECE policy related to spirituality. Working backwards through the documents generated a chronological thread which mapped the representation of young children’s spiritual development, alongside the policy shifts leading policy continuity (Ball, 1999) and discontinuity (Foucault, 2002a). The findings are therefore presented chronologically.

4.3 The genealogical lens – searching for the spiritual thread

Historically compulsory education in England begins after the child’s fifth birthday (Great Britain, 1870). The Acland Report (HMSO, 1908) highlighted that some children attended elementary schools from the age of three, which resulted in questioning the suitability of school provision for children under the age of five years. Access to the outdoors and a less formal classroom environment for younger children were factors debated by the committee. Froebel’s influence on early education resonates through the Acland Report, which contemplates children younger than the compulsory school age would

benefit from having teachers trained in Froebelian principles (HMSO, 1908). Hadow, in a Board of Education Report (1933) focused on infant and nursery schools, also documented Froebel's impact on ECE. Isaacs (1930) contributed to this report that also acknowledged the impact of the educational principles of Dewey, Montessori and Margaret McMillan (Board of Education, 1933). These historical documents affirm the influence of early childhood education pioneers on early years practice in England. Yet, the identifiable policy drivers and strategies (Rizvi and Lingard, 2010) of nursery schools, for children from two to five, appear to focus on the developing child's health, well-being and a school readiness discourse. These policy drivers remain recognisable in contemporary policy and are presented later in the chapter (DfE 2017a; 2014a; 2011, Allen, 2011; Field, 2010; Marmot, 2010).

A medicalised model of school readiness is suggested in 1933, for example, a stated reason for establishing nursery schools is "...they ensured adequate medical supervision of children before admission to the public elementary school" (Board of Education, 1933, p.102). Education is positioned as a solution or policy lever to the problem, because it is contributing to a public health agenda (Rizvi and Lingard, 2010), with the result that pre-compulsory schooling should aim towards fostering and prioritising "physical, mental and moral" (Board of Education, 1933, p.117) development in nursery schools and classes. In contrast, the intention of education to promote the child's holistic development in infant schools is noted in this report:

Our main concern must be to supply children between the ages of five and seven plus with what is essential for their healthy growth, physical, intellectual, spiritual and moral, during this particular stage of development. (Board of Education, 1933, p.121)

Two significant points are raised in this statement, first it recognises supporting spiritual growth in education from the age of five, corresponding with the compulsory school starting age. Second, illustrated in the Board of Education (1933) statement is the use of the criterion precedence of age to divide children into stages of education, this continues in England (DfE, 2017a; 2014a; 2013a). Additionally, in this report children's early "religious questioning" (Board of Education, 1933, p.130) is suggested to be inspired through wonder of the

natural world and is supported through engaging with hymns, stories and poetry. However, 'curriculum' is explained "...to be thought of in terms of activity and experience rather than of knowledge to be acquired and facts to be stored" (Board of Education, 1933, p.122). Noteworthy is a caution against the use of the word curriculum in the context of educational provision for children below the age of seven plus, described "...dangerous as suggesting a systematic procedure which is opposed to the unordered way in which the child has hitherto developed his powers" (Board of Education, 1933, p.122). Resistance to use the word 'curriculum' in contemporary English ECE policy is observable in contemporary policies since 1996 (SCAA, 1996), with the exception of the Foundation Stage (QCA, 2000). The word 'curriculum' was then replaced by 'framework' with the introduction of the EYFS (DCSF, 2008a). This combined the principles of the Birth to Three Matters framework (DfES, 2002), Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage (QCA, 2000) and the National Standards for Under 8s Daycare and Childminding (DfES, 2003a; 2003b) to form a single statutory framework. This point will be returned to later in this chapter.

A clear reference in legislation to children's spiritual development is stated in the Education Act 1944 for the stages of primary, secondary, and further education. It became the duty of the local authorities "...so far as their powers extend, to contribute towards the spiritual, moral, mental, and physical development of the community..." (HMSO, 1944, p.4). Clearly, early education is not recognised in this list, although if 'early' is added as a stage before the primary stage and 'higher' after further education this completes the "hierarchical" (Moss, 2013 p.4) structure of the stages of education. Each of these stages of education is underpinned by a readiness agenda to prepare the child for the next education stage (Moss, 2013). Therefore, the findings of the analysis so far confirm the promotion of children's spiritual development in primary education is enshrined in legislation (HMSO, 1944). The next step of the analysis continued the search for any reference in legislation to this aspect of development below compulsory school age.

4.4 The child at the heart of policy and practice

Positioning the child at the centre of primary education policy and practice

Plowden argues "At the heart of the educational process lies the child" (DES, 1967, p.7). This principle was considered essential for education policy development and child-centred pedagogy. Plowden (DES, 1967) reported the importance of teachers and other adults in the school community role modelling behaviour for children. Applying role modelling to spiritual and moral values, Plowden associated this with kindness and "...to love and to care for others" (DES, 1967, p.206). Love is an infrequently used word in educational reports and Page (2011) proposes "loving young children" (p.312) is rarely discussed in professional contexts. In contrast, love is associated with spirituality and is stated in definitions, as illustrated in Chapter 2. Like spirituality, the meaning of love is open to interpretation (Page, 2011). Plowden clarified "A teacher cannot and should not give the deep, personal love that each child needs from his parents" (DES, 1967, p.52). Indeed, this could be interpreted that Plowden is advocating a vocational love or "professional love" (Page, 2011, p.310) contextualised in the ethics of care for pupils. Further reference to children's spiritual development in Plowden's Report (DES, 1967) is intertwined with the content and teaching of the syllabus of religious education for children in primary schools.

The quality of educational provision for children aged three to four became the focus of attention following the Education Reform Act 1988 (HMSO,1988), which introduced a National Curriculum and the key stages of compulsory education. Rumbold (DES, 1990) reported the legal requirement of the broad and balanced curriculum, including promoting pupil's spiritual development, is not legislated in provision below the compulsory school age. Consequently, in the Rumbold Report it was advised that these aspects of the curriculum should be viewed as objectives within ECE (DES, 1990). Primarily the Rumbold Report (DES, 1990) challenged the differences between the pre-compulsory and compulsory sectors of education, while proposing a solution to provide equal opportunities for children attending pre-school provision to access a curriculum with the same entitlement to pupils in compulsory education (Rizvi and Lingard, 2010).

A fundamental point in the Rumbold Report refers to valuing the child's "cultural and religious life" (DES, 1990, p.37), thus recommending a shift in policy to engage a broad and balanced curriculum for children under five to include a spiritual and moral framework. In a suggested curriculum for children under five, the Rumbold Report (DES, 1990) outlines events young children participate in at home and in the community, illustrating the importance of celebrations, ceremonies and festivals. These points, along with others proposed by Rumbold (DES, 1990), were later reiterated in Start Right: The Importance of Early Learning Report (Ball, 1994). Celebrations were also referred to in later curriculum and practice guidance (Early Education, 2012; DCSF, 2008b; QCA, 2000).

Ball refers to "a broken promise" (1994, p.6) made in 1972 in a Conservative government White Paper (HMSO, 1972), for there to be availability for free nursery education for all parents wanting this for their children aged three to four years. The Start Right: The Importance of Early Learning Report also highlights the neglect of young children's needs, particularly those from "deprived and disadvantaged backgrounds" (Ball, 1994, p.75), arguing for the importance of nursery education and suggesting this to be the foundation of education. Indeed Ball (1994) questioned if nursery education should be compulsory, whilst acknowledging the holistic aspects of development, including the spiritual dimension. Thereby, problematising the deficiency and delay of funded nursery education, yet proposing the solution of providing the right start for all children through universal nursery education to reduce disadvantage and to improve later educational outcomes. Such strategies (Rizvi and Lingard, 2010), also focus on the long-term impact which aims for the society to have a world-class workforce.

4.5 Young children's spiritual development focused in the curriculum

Spiritual development is explicitly referenced in the Nursery Education Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning on Entering Compulsory Education (SCAA, 1996), composed of "goals for learning for children by the time they enter compulsory education" (p.1) that coincided with the introduction of funded nursery education for four-year-old children (HMSO, 1996). As a result,

inspectors of funded nursery education were required by law to report on the spiritual development of children (HMSO, 1996). Fundamentally, these Desirable Outcomes were presented as six areas of learning aiming to provide “a foundation for Key Stage 1 of the National Curriculum” (SCAA, 1996, p.1). However, spiritual dimensions are portrayed as observable in the wording of part of the Personal and Social Development outcome, “They respond to relevant cultural and religious events and show a range of feelings, such as wonder, joy or sorrow, in response to their experiences of the world” (SCAA, 1996, p.2). Positively, this advanced the position of spiritual development in ECE policy, nevertheless as it is included in a Desirable Outcome (SCAA, 1996) it suggests association with school readiness. The National Curriculum Council (1993) and The School Curriculum and Assessment Authority (SCAA, 1995) published guidance for maintained schools that outlined promoting spiritual and moral development across the curriculum. Eight spiritual aspects were identified by SCAA (1995) presented in the following order “Beliefs...A sense of awe, wonder and mystery...Experiencing feelings of transcendence...Search for meaning and purpose...Self-knowledge...Relationships...Creativity... Feelings and emotions” (pp. P-Q). These aspects formed part of the broad and balanced curriculum to implement the requirements of the Education Reform Act 1988 (HMSO, 1988) and subsequently the Education (Schools) Act 1992 (HMSO, 1992).

Investment in education requires accountability, particularly if the aim is to improve children’s life chances, and to raise the overall quality of provision. Yet, emerging from this policy and documentary analysis is the triangular relationship between funded nursery education, a statutory curriculum and assessment. The ECE sector of education remains diverse due to the range of provision in the maintained as well as the private, voluntary and independent (PVI) sectors of pre-compulsory education (Roberts-Holmes, 2012). However, historically a single ECE policy to be interpreted by practitioners working in the maintained and non-maintained sectors, regardless of their qualifications, emerged alongside the government funding of nursery education.

4.6 Promoting spiritual development in the Foundation Stage

The New Labour government policy, from 1997, increased the focus on early years education and childcare, aiming to extend provision and choices for parents within a ten year National Childcare Strategy (HMSO, 2004b).

Fundamental to these ECE policies, is that parents of young children are seen as policy consumers (Moss, 2014; Ball et al., 2011), in what is described by Ball and Vincent (2005) as a “peculiar market” (p.565). For example, services are childcare based, underpinned by “social, moral and emotional components” (Ball and Vincent, 2005, p.565) and parents have to make rational and emotional decisions as consumers to access early education and childcare provision. The Effective Provision of Pre-school Education (EPPE) project (Sylva et al., 2004), a longitudinal study funded by the Department for Education and Skills that researched the “effects of pre-school education and care on children’s development” (p.i) from aged three to seven years, reports that policies were driven by the aim to reduce poverty, to increase childcare provision to support parents returning to work and for all children to be ready for school to access the National Curriculum. Systematically, the justification of nursery funded education is driven by a school readiness discourse, with the potential to progressively lead to a “schoolification” (Moss, 2013, p.5) pedagogical approach in pre-school education.

The advent of the Foundation Stage of education introduced a curriculum, starting from age three, consisting of six areas of learning with a summative assessment focused on prescribed early learning goals (QCA, 2000).

Subsequently a revised area of learning, PSED emerged with the addition of emotional development to the personal and social development area of learning (QCA, 2000). Significantly this area of learning in the curriculum maintained a spiritual focus of development as practitioners were informed, they “should give particular attention to...planning activities that promote emotional, moral, spiritual and social development alongside intellectual development” (QCA, 2000, p.28). This exact wording later appeared in the draft consultation document of the EYFS (DfES, 2006a, p.27), this point is debated later in this chapter. Essentially the aspects of development included in the Foundation Stage (QCA, 2000) represent the suggested components of a broad and

balanced curriculum for children under five proposed in both the Rumbold Report (DES, 1990) and the Start Right: The Importance of Early Learning Report (Ball, 1994). Of significance to this genealogy, is the pivotal change in ECE policy when the Education Act 2002 brought the Foundation Stage (QCA, 2000) into the National Curriculum (HMSO, 2002). Explicitly in this legislation, children's spiritual development from age three was acknowledged to be promoted in early years practice in maintained schools, maintained nursery schools and in settings in receipt of nursery education funding (HMSO, 2002).

In contrast, the provision for religious education cited in Section 80 of this Education Act to be included in the "basic curriculum" (HMSO, 2002, p.55) did not apply to registered nursery class pupils in primary schools (HMSO, 2002, Section 80 - 2a). Amendment to the wording of this requirement of the Education Act 2002 came into force through the Childcare Act (2006), changing this exemption to "pupils who are under compulsory school age" (HMSO, 2006, p.59). Non-statutory religious education guidance for English schools informed practitioners of this exemption while also proposing RE "...can form a valuable part of the educational experience of children in the EYFS" (DCSF, 2010, p.34). In addition, this guidance justifies the contribution of learning about religions and beliefs through religious education to meet the aims of Section 78 (1) of the Education Act 2002 (DCSF, 2010; HMSO, 2002). More recent guidance informs of the legal requirement of religious education "for all pupils on the school roll, including all those in the reception year" (RECEW, 2013, p.13). Parents have the right to withdraw their child from religious education (McCreery et al., 2008). Nevertheless, no reference is made to these religious education entitlements in the EYFS statutory framework (DfE, 2017a; 2014a).

At this stage, it is compelling for three reasons to present the exact wording of the Education Act 2002 regarding spiritual development in this analysis, which I present in Table 4.2. First, the text illustrates that provision appears to split into two distinct categories of maintained and funded nursery education in non-maintained provision. Second, children in the Foundation Stage of education are categorised as pupils. Third, a policy shift, which demonstrates both policy continuity (Ball, 1999) and discontinuity (Foucault, 2002a), this is analysed in section 4.7.

Table 4.2 Directly quoted from the Education Act 2002 – locating the promotion of young children’s spiritual development in legislation

Education Act 2002	Chapter 32, Part 6
78. General requirements in relation to curriculum	
(1) The curriculum for a maintained school or maintained nursery school satisfies the requirements of this section if it is a balanced and broadly based curriculum which—	
(a) promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school and of society, and	
(b) prepares pupils at the school for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life (HMSO, 2002, p.53)	
(2) The curriculum for any funded nursery education provided otherwise than at a maintained school or maintained nursery school satisfies the requirements of this section if it is a balanced and broadly based curriculum which—	
(a) promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of the pupils for whom the funded nursery education is provided and of society, and	
(b) prepares those pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life (HMSO, 2002, p.54)	

Investment in nursery education and the Foundation Stage (HMSO, 2002) entry into the National Curriculum, changed the early years landscape even further with the introduction of a national assessment through a Foundation Stage Profile (QCA, 2003). The concept of “a level playing field” (DfES, 2006b, p.6) was used to equalise the free entitlement of funding for three and four-year-old children between maintained and non-maintained provision, which aimed to provide choice for parents. For practitioners within an agenda to higher standards, neo-liberal policy reforms according to Osgood (2006) “...have resulted in greatly reduced autonomy as a consequence of the regulatory gaze and accompanying directives and diktats” (p.6). Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC) in the Foundation Stage remained part of the “regulatory gaze” (Osgood, 2006, p.6) focused on assessing if predefined standards were met, as inspectors of funded nursery education provision judged the extent to which these aspects of development were fostered (Ofsted,

2006; 2004b; HMSO, 2002). Clarification of what inspectors were looking for in the early years was published (Ofsted, 2004b). This guidance for inspectors implied young children's spiritual development can be supported but is not reliant on religious education. Proposed examples of what might be observed highlighted children's expression of wonder, reflection, sharing beliefs, responses to listening to music and experiencing tranquility (Ofsted, 2004b).

Although no explanation of the term 'spiritual' was given in the Foundation Stage curriculum guidance (QCA, 2000), Ofsted (2004a) published its own definitions for schools for all stages of education, as previously discussed in Chapter 1. The dialogue surrounding SMSC in this document express the connectedness of these aspects of development (Ofsted, 2004a). However, it appears that attention focusing on young children's spiritual development reduced shortly after this (DfES, 2006a), in response to the introduction of the Every Child Matters framework (DfES, 2004; HMSO, 2003a). This aimed to reform and improve children's care and services in response to the Lord Laming inquiry (HMSO, 2003b). Consisting of five outcomes, "being healthy...staying safe...enjoying and achieving...making a positive contribution...economic well-being" (DfES, 2004, p.9), for children to achieve underpinned by the Children Act 2004 (HMSO, 2004a) Every Child Matters focused on the well-being of all children.

No direct reference to children's spiritual needs appear in the Every Child Matters framework (DfES, 2004), nonetheless they can be interpreted as implicit within the underlying principles, for example, holistically promoting children's health and well-being (Watson, 2006). Fundamentally, young children's well-being is also prioritised in the Childcare Act 2006 (HMSO, 2006) and supporting children to achieve the five outcomes became the "overarching aim" (DCSF, 2008a, p.7) of the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage for children from birth to five. A paradox noted in the introduction of this thesis is the discrepancy between the inclusion of promoting spiritual development in non-statutory practice guidance of the EYFS (DCSF, 2008b), yet not in the statutory framework (DCSF, 2008a). To explore this further the next step in the analysis was to research the Childcare Act 2006,

legislation underpinning the EYFS, this is imperative because it removed the Foundation Stage from the National Curriculum (HMSO, 2006).

4.7 The policy shift splitting the early childhood education spiritual discourse

Spiritual development is not directly referenced in the Childcare Act 2006 (HMSO, 2006), therefore, it is not detectable through a text search.

Nevertheless, it is discernible in an amendment to the curriculum of the Education Act 2002 (c32) stipulated in the Childcare Act 2006, located in Schedule 1 (point 5), “In section 78 of the 2002 Act (general requirements in relation to the curriculum), omit subsection (2)” (HMSO, 2006, p. 59). This omission from the Education Act 2002 creates a policy shift causing disparity through continuity and discontinuity of policy (Foucault, 2002a; Ball, 1999). This can be viewed as a silent change, only noticeable if the two pieces of legislation are connected through tracking the repeals cited in the Childcare Act 2006. Subsequently, returning to Table 4.2, subsection (1) remained, which preserved the requirement to promote children’s spiritual development in maintained schools, including maintained nursery schools (HMSO, 2006; HMSO, 2002). However, omitting subsection (2) removed the requirement to promote children’s spiritual development outside of the maintained sector in funded nursery education.

This sector divide contradicts the proposal in the consultation document for the EYFS (DfES, 2006a) where a “level playing field” (p.iv) approach across sectors is specified. Predominantly, drafts are amended after consultation. In its presentation, the draft EYFS document changed from one comprehensive document to a pack containing a statutory document and non-statutory guidance resources. The statement repeating the requirement to promote spiritual development in the draft EYFS document (DfES, 2006a) mirrored the wording from the Foundation Stage curriculum guidance (QCA, 2000). Following consultation, the promotion of children’s spiritual development transferred into the non-statutory guidance (DCSF, 2008b). Interestingly, reference to a “play-based curriculum” (DfES, 2006a, p.6) was not transferred to the EYFS documents (DCSF, 2008a; 2008b) either.

Unequivocally, the 2008 EYFS practice guidance resources positioned spiritual development as a component of holistic development in the statement “Babies and children develop in individual ways and at varying rates. Every area of development – physical, cognitive, linguistic, spiritual, social and emotional – is equally important” (DCSF, 2008c, p.1.1). Additionally, these resources referred to “spiritual well-being” (DCSF, 2008c, p.1.4) and “spiritual beliefs” (DCSF, 2008c, p.1.2). Clarification of the meaning of these terms was not presented in the glossary, which might assume practitioners knew how to promote this area of development through their training.

This contrasts with the birth to five, Early Years Learning Framework for Australia, where educators are informed “Spiritual: refers to a range of human experiences including a sense of awe and wonder, and an exploration of being and knowing” (Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, 2009, p.46). Nevertheless, non-statutory EYFS practice guidance in the PSED area of learning and development also informed practitioners to “Plan activities that promote emotional, moral, spiritual and social development together with intellectual development” (DCSF, 2008b, p.25). Therefore, from a non-statutory perspective spirituality or the promotion of spiritual development is firmly cited inclusively for all children in the EYFS practice guidance at this point, compared to its exclusive statutory position for children in maintained provision (HMSO, 2002) which is absent in the statutory framework.

Sagberg (2017) reflects on the development of children’s rights and refers to it as “a modern concept” (p.25), however the identified policy shift (Rizvi and Lingard, 2010) challenges the spiritual rights (Watson, 2017; UNICEF 1989) of young children attending provision otherwise than in maintained schools and maintained nursery schools (HMSO, 2002). The rights of the children attending maintained provision in England (HMSO, 2002), are reiterated in a document analysing legislation (DfE, 2010) explicitly linked to children’s rights in the context of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (DfE, 2010; UNICEF, 1989). Conversely, the absence of reference to spirituality in the Childcare Act 2006 (HMSO, 2006) and subsequently the statutory EYFS

framework (DCSF, 2008a), indicates a discontinuity of policy (Foucault, 2002a). Despite PSED becoming one of three prime areas of learning and development in the revised EYFS (DfE, 2012; DfE, 2011) all references to spiritual dimensions disappeared from the revised non-statutory guidance (Early Education, 2012).

A school readiness agenda is transparent in the 2008 revised EYFS (DfE, 2012), however a range of government-commissioned reports informed some of the changes to this policy. For example, Field (2010) in the independent review of poverty and life chances and Tickell (DfE, 2011) recommended a mandatory development check for children at 24-36 months in addition to the summative assessment at the end of the Reception year already in place, and these were integrated into the EYFS (DfE, 2012). The Marmot Review (2010) of health inequalities in England also supports the school readiness agenda. Therefore, the EYFS framework at the time of the data collection of this thesis contained no explicit reference to children's spirituality or spiritual development (DfE, 2014a). This also applies to the revised framework published in 2017 (DfE, 2017a). Nonetheless, a proposal put forward by the government to increase early years provision, encouraged schools to lower the starting age to two years in early years provision (DfE, 2013b). Subsequently, school inspectors report an overall judgement on the promotion of pupils' SMSC development, including those with early years provision (Ofsted, 2017).

4.8 Increasing the spotlight on SMSC development through British values

Extending the spotlight on the responsibility of promoting pupils' SMSC development in maintained schools is the requirement to promote fundamental British values (Ofsted, 2017; HMG, 2015; DfE, 2014b). The non-statutory guidance for maintained schools' states:

Schools should promote the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. This can help schools to demonstrate how they are meeting the requirements of section 78 of the Education Act 2002, in their provision of SMSC. (DfE, 2014b, p.5)

Regarding British values the glossary of the Prevent Strategy (HMG, 2011) describes extremism "...is vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values" (p.107). Indeed, explicit reference to the duty of schools to promote SMSC development and British values in the context of protecting children from radicalisation resonates in the revised guidance (HMG, 2015). Promoting SMSC development of pupils also applies to free schools, academies and independent schools, as well as the promotion of British values (Ofsted, 2017; TSO, 2014; DfE, 2013a; HMSO, 2010b). Whereas in the EYFS, without a specific reference to spiritual, moral and cultural development, promoting fundamental British values is associated with the prime area of learning and development of "personal, social and emotional development" (HMG, 2015, p.10). British values must be integrated in early years practice, and similar to school inspections, a judgement is made whether these values are actively promoted within leadership and management (Ofsted, 2015b).

So far, the findings illustrate the position of spiritual development in English ECE policy. In the next section of this chapter the widened policy search aimed to research if this position of young children's spiritual development is universal across the United Kingdom.

4.9 The spiritual policy thread across the early childhood education and care frameworks of the United Kingdom

Nationally, across the UK the children's age ranges of the policy frameworks and curricula differ (Wood, 2013), which problematise a comparison of the four frameworks. A commonality they share is, however, age-related as they all refer to the education of children aged four to five years. I searched for explicit spiritual references in the policy texts (Fairclough, 2003). The Curriculum for Excellence (Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2009) of Scotland, for children from three years explicitly mentions "spiritual wellbeing" (p.12), "spiritual traditions" (p.225) and "spiritual life" (p.241). Within the primary curriculum of Northern Ireland, starting at four years, an objective is for teachers to support children to develop "spiritual understanding" (Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment, 2007, p.4). Moral and spiritual development is explicit in the Welsh Foundation Phase Framework (DfES, 2015) for children

from three to seven years incorporated into the Personal and Social Development, Well-being and Cultural Diversity statutory area of learning in maintained and non-maintained provision. Reference is also made to the Education Act 2002 (HMSO, 2002) in this framework (DfES, 2015). In addition, like England, all these frameworks have religious education programmes. While the EYFS framework of England lacks spiritual references, the findings of this analysis suggest children attending schools and maintained nursery school provision are entitled through legislation to spiritual education regardless of age (TSO, 2014; HMSO, 2002).

4.10 Summary of documentary and policy analysis findings

The findings of the documentary and policy analysis suggest the trajectory (Ball, 1993) of promoting young children's spiritual development moved from an ECE objective (DES, 1990) to validation in legislation (HMSO, 2002). Maintaining the legislative requirement in maintained schools to promote spiritual development provides equality for all pupils in this provision; regardless of age. Age is nevertheless a dividing factor when it comes to the entitlement to religious education, as legislation does not include children under the compulsory school age but applies to those in the Reception year (HMSO, 2006; 2002). Confusingly, no direct reference to this requirement appears in the statutory EYFS framework (DfE, 2014a) or to promote spiritual development in the settings subject to the Education Act 2002 and indeed subsequent legislation (HMSO, 2011; HMSO, 2010b).

The removal of the legal requirement to promote spiritual development outside of maintained provision is traceable to the Childcare Act 2006 (HMSO, 2006). Yet, between 2008-2012 practice guidance informed practitioners to promote holistic development (DCSF, 2008b), incorporating spiritual, and this implies it was seen as 'good practice' and fundamentally acknowledges spiritual well-being and spiritual development as a child's right regardless of age (Sagberg, 2017; Watson, 2017; UNICEF, 1989).

A limitation of documentary analysis is there is no access to policy-makers, in contrast to an elite study, to question why policy amendments took place.

However, the policy shift has implications for practice in both sectors of ECE provision and policies should not be thought of as what is 'done to children', it is the child's well-being, learning and development that should be at the centre of the policy focus. Therefore, in the following chapter the findings of the research are presented to illustrate what spirituality means to the participants of the study.

Chapter 5 Findings

5.1 The chapter outline to present the findings

Findings generated from the data, analysed as stated in Chapter 3, are presented in this chapter which is structured to contextualise these findings with the research questions. An “ethics of care approach” (Prosser, 2011, p.493) is prioritised to respect confidentiality and anonymity in this chapter (BERA, 2011), because unique and sensitive characteristics of some of the selected artefacts raised the possibility of participant identification. Furthermore, as previously stated in Chapter 3, the qualification level of the practitioners is another identifiable factor, therefore pseudonyms are withheld in parts of this chapter.

Structured to respond to the following research questions, an objective within the chapter’s ethical framework is to avoid data fragmentation (Punch, 2014) and the verbatim accounts aim to present “a fair representation” (Wellington, 2015, p.277) of what has been respondent validated as said in the interviews.

How do practitioners and parents of young children define spirituality?

What does provision for promoting spiritual development look like in everyday practice?

What is the relevance of promoting spiritual development in contemporary early years practice in England?

To what extent does the promotion of young children’s spiritual development exist in early education and childcare qualification training?

The overarching primary research question: What does spirituality mean to practitioners and parents of young children in contemporary early years practice within the Early Years Foundation Stage of England? also forms part of this

chapter's framework and the response to this question extends to Chapter 6. The following section identifies the participant selected artefacts supporting their definitions of spirituality.

5.2 Participant selected artefacts supporting the definition of spirituality

All the participants provided contextual information prior to the field question inviting the reveal of each participant's artefact linked to their definitions of spirituality. Without any prompts through researcher selected "visual elicitation" (Prosser, 2011, p.484), in the form of written published definitions or photographs, the participants composed their own definitions of spirituality. Wellington (2015, p.238) notes visual methods can provide "unique access into private spaces", in this spirituality-focused research the visual images linked to family and sacred spaces. Narratives underpinning the selection of the artefacts were revealed in-depth during the interviews. However, photographs were not taken of the artefacts, this was intentional due to the distinctive visual and sensitive characteristics of the items which risked participant identification. Additionally, this decision was to avoid unnecessary intrusion (BERA, 2011). Instead, I invited the participants to describe their artefacts to provide the opportunity to capture "abstract values" (Wellington, 2015, p. 239) that escape visual images.

Eight participants revealed or described artefacts in their interviews and two opted not to select one. Without probing, one participant explained the reason for not bringing an artefact, "I don't really have an object to show you, because for me things that are related to spirituality...is just to be somewhere or be in a calm environment. For example: at the park or somewhere with a natural landscape". This raised awareness to the spiritual scope of outdoor environments, natural spaces, connecting with nature and experiencing tranquillity. In the interviews where artefacts were presented, I recorded in the field notes how each item was revealed, a pattern of exposure emerged within the data analysis. First, the artefacts were not disclosed during the interviews until I asked the field question related to the artefact, although three participants were wearing them. Second, in the interview dialogue each participant justified

the history and reason for selecting the artefact, as well as the invisible properties of these possessions (Hood and Bloom, 2008). For example, two participants selected artefacts connected to relatives who had died. The first, a ring, was described by the participant as “Very, very precious, not just a piece of jewellery but emotionally precious”. Sharing the history of the ring the participant explained its family connections which led to reflecting on the spiritual impact of bereavement. The second artefact linking to bereavement, a funeral “Order of Service”, contained the photograph of the deceased and was revealed with a dialogue of reflected memories of time spent with the person. This artefact was described by the participant as representing “resilience” and memories of the funeral. The participant explained “I brought this because I had to stand up and was asked to say something and every time I look at this I am quite proud of myself for doing that”.

Family memories connecting generations continued to be linked to the artefacts. Photographs were chosen by two participants to discuss in the interviews. One album of photographs, not presented in the interview, was described by the participant as “...containing family photos...it just brings me a lot of love and happiness...it is a timeline of photos”, illustrating photographs of the child’s “first cuddles” with relatives. The second photograph album was presented in the interview, it was described as “ongoing” and was commenced when the child was born and documents first experiences “...first bath, first Christmas and it just has other special photos in there”. Contextualising the reason for selecting this artefact in relation to spiritual development the participant emphasised “You almost forget they were tiny, little babies” and this provides the opportunity to “Just look at happy memories”. Whilst the artefacts were handled by the participants, I observed gentle handling as these objects became tools of empowerment for the interviewee to open the dialogue without being asked intrusive questions. This dialogue occurred at a similar depth where artefacts had been selected but not presented in the interview.

One participant, discussed in the interview a possible artefact she would have chosen would be one of her child’s drawings “I find them quite meaningful and obviously I get very proud, that is why that type of item would be quite a nice

thing to share and show". Later, in a follow-up meeting a child's drawing was revealed and described by the participant as a drawing of the "family". A participant selected two items to demonstrate how their spirituality definition had changed over time. The first "...a golden cross" (not present at the interview) was described as linked "...to my first understanding of spirituality – to the importance of religion and faith". The second, "...a wedding anniversary ring" also "...linked to religion, it was blessed in a church...it is something very important to me and the spiritual path of life. Because that ring represents what my life is, my children and my partner". A cross worn and presented by a participant was described as "It means a lot to me and my family. It is an empty cross because Jesus died for us and rose again". A scapular was chosen by one participant, "...because I am a Catholic and traditionally you wear it...it is something precious to me, I have it on my person". As the scapular is worn under clothing a previously worn scapular was revealed in the interview and handled by the participant, with images described as "Our Lady which is Mother Mary, and Jesus". The participant explained her reluctance to discard scapulars with faded pictures because of "...the spiritual connection".

Correspondingly, these artefacts represented connections to culture, family, the life cycle from birth to death, celebrations, memories, religion, faith and beliefs. The artefacts provided a tool for opening discussions focusing on what spirituality meant to the participants leading to the expression of personal definitions of spirituality, these are presented in the next section of this chapter.

Summary of finding – points for discussion

1. The theme of connectedness permeated the selection of artefacts.
2. The participants' reasons for selecting specific artefacts illustrated spiritual connections.
3. The artefacts provided a bridging tool to open the spirituality dialogue whether they were present or not in the interview.

5.3 How do practitioners and parents of young children define spirituality?

Following each artefact reveal the participants expressed their personal understanding of what spirituality means. Definitions proposed by the practitioners in the first interview became working definitions revisited in their final interview. These are presented later in the chapter in the context of the relevance of promoting spiritual development in early years practice. A similarity to the examples of definitions presented in the reviewed literature in Chapter 2, is the complexity of the participants' definitions or descriptions of spirituality. The draft field questions for practitioners (Appendix 4) and parents (Appendix 5) contained no reference to religion. Whereas, religion became a starting point in some of the responses to clarify the participants' definition or description of spirituality. For example, multifaceted aspects of spirituality noted by Ruth propose how it can be defined in a religious location and linked to moral values:

Because to me spirituality can't be defined in one way...if you define it with a religious point of view, it is a morality...the moral values.

Yet, Ruth also emphasised spirituality in the educational context for children encompassed the importance of new experiences providing learning and excitement, associated with awe, wonder and mystery. Ruth stated:

...whenever they come to an activity whichever excites them...and makes them say 'Oh wow'.

Reference to religion and beliefs also contextualised the definition of Valerie, who like Ruth included morals in the definition. For Valerie spirituality is:

...like a combination of my religion and my beliefs, my beliefs not necessarily just in a spiritual form but in everyday life, and in morals and things like that...

Alice started her definition acknowledging people have differing views when defining spirituality, the inner self is recognised regarding factors such as connectedness, self-perception and perception of others. In the early

childhood context, well-being incorporated within personal, social and emotional development is represented as Alice stated:

I think most people when they ask me they would relate to religion. But I have to differ, because I think it is not just about religion, but I know at some point you know you feel you have to be connected to something that is much greater...like the universe. But I think it is more towards yourself really, how you feel about yourself, how you feel about others as well, how you feel about things all around you and how you make it into a positive thing.

Kate expressed the difficulty of defining spirituality, leading the definition with acknowledgement of non-material elements, while raising awareness to the connectedness of mind, body, spirit and soul. Combined in this definition is a reference to belongingness and love (Maslow, 1943), self-awareness as well as life and death. Kate explained:

I find it really difficult to define. Because it is something that you can't see...something like an energy, like a force...it is not material and is not physical because you can't feel it and touch it. Something...connected to hope, life, love, happiness, so to the mind and body...death. The spirit, the soul, our wonder and like a deeper understanding of ourselves and others, deeper thoughts and like a sense of belonging.

Similarly, Judith spoke of the internal components of spirituality while describing the 'spiritual me'. Initially suggesting "I didn't think that I was a spiritual person...but once I thought about what does it mean? I became a spiritual person". Building on this with the suggestion of actions are underpinned by beliefs and adding an external dimension to this definition:

...that it is about what you feel inside as a person...and what you believe within you. So, it is your belief and not necessarily right and wrong, but it is what makes you tick, how you look at things, how you interpret things, how you understand things and that makes you as a person who you are, that is the spiritual me...my actions are caused by what I believe in. And that is what I believe is my spiritual side.

Anne's dialogue commenced by connecting to the importance of a person's well-being and the building of memories. Applying this to practice, searching for meaning through questioning and children's curiosity are also captured in Anne's definition:

I think it's about your well-being and it's about asking questions of life...and like your body and your soul and things like that...I think children...that is where it needs to be promoted, they are curious about things and I think spirituality is about being curious and learning isn't it? I think that is why children go - Why? What has happened?

Magical thinking became another concept added to Anne's spirituality definition:

I just think it is very important, as it is the way children magically think...

These six definitions, proposed by the practitioners in their first interview, preceded the engagement in identifying spiritually focused practice in diaries. Intentionally, the final field question returned to their definitions. The proposed changes will be presented later in this chapter. Definitions were also provided by the parents in their interviews. Dimensions of spirituality were described by Alexandra who, like Kate, included love. The broadness of spirituality is suggested in Alexandra's definition:

It is a tough one to define, I find it hard to define...I have got all these different things in my head...it is like an umbrella of different things. First of all, I think of love and just like exploration...being a free spirit...just like lots of different things all bundled together.

April proposed spirituality is hard to define suggesting this is due to the personal characteristics for each person. Focusing on the notion of 'you are your spirit', April explained:

I think spirituality is different for everyone, so I think it is quite hard to define...I think it is very personal for each person and what makes you...you. So, it is how you feel about things, your opinion of things, your faith...so I think it is you...you are your spirit really.

Similar to Kate and Ofsted (2004a), Jay included the human non-material element, defining spirituality as:

...elements of a human being's perspective that does not include flesh and bones. Things that you cannot actually touch and feel.

Like Ruth, Natalie focused on fostering excitement as she stated:

...with spirituality, I would say it is like a magical thing for children or imaginative play or just making something more exciting.

To find out how these definitions transfer into practice I invited the participants to reflect on the characteristics they anticipate identify provision for promoting spiritual development in everyday early years practice. These are presented in the next section following the summary of findings for discussion.

Summary of finding – points for discussion

1. Defining spirituality is declared challenging by some of the participants, as well as personal to an individual.
2. Spirituality combines many concepts – inclusive of 'an umbrella of different things'.
3. Spirituality represents the inner self – 'the spiritual me'; 'you are your spirit'.

5.4 Locating the promotion of spiritual development in the EYFS

In the first interview the six practitioners all working in different settings, confirmed the statutory EYFS framework (DfE, 2014a) underpinned their practice. One practitioner worked in a setting where the EYFS and the Montessori curriculum were combined in practice, stating in the Montessori curriculum "...the child has this natural interest; which is deeply spiritual". The next field question for the practitioners focused on the location of promoting spiritual development in the EYFS (DfE, 2014a). In this section of the chapter, where the participants propose promoting spiritual development is locatable in the EYFS, I contextualise the suggested location with reference to the statutory

framework (DfE, 2014a). However, Kate spoke of the absence of vocabulary pertaining directly to spirituality in the EYFS:

...that is difficult because the spirituality context is not evident in the Early Years Foundation Stage at all. It is difficult to explain because the word spirituality is not there in written form, but it is still embedded into the EYFS.

Applying theory to practice was recommended by Anne to use alongside the EYFS policy documentation as she suggested the promotion of spiritual development can be found in the “characteristics of effective teaching and learning” (DfE, 2014a, p.9), for example through investigation, exploring and enjoying achievements. Alice also referred to the characteristics of effective teaching and learning underpinning the EYFS, highlighting the importance of young children exploring and playing:

I think that is really important spiritually, because I think we need to respect their play because that is how they pursue their innate desires, what they want to do.

The connection to the overarching principle of the “unique child” (DfE, 2014a, p.6) to nurture spirituality resonated through the responses of Anne, Kate and Ruth. Kate, Judith and Valerie located fostering spirituality in the prime area of learning and development of “Personal, social and emotional development” (DfE, 2014a, p.8). Judith emphasised the importance of attachment and the role of the “key person” (DfE, 2014a, p.10) in the EYFS, linking nurturing spirituality to the positive relationships between the child and key person. Respect of others linked together the interpretation of Kate and Valerie in the context of forming “positive relationships” (DfE, 2014a, p.16). In addition, Valerie’s perspective of promoting spiritual development in the EYFS incorporates moral and social development, as well as values:

I think there is a lot of guidance and teaching towards being a good person, or a good human and caring for others and a lot of respect and...values. I think it is a lot of working together, accepting each other, and a lot of expressing and allowing people to be individuals and being tolerant of each other, of individual’s and peoples’ choices.

Children's choices were also acknowledged by Ruth who included the overarching principle of "enabling environments" (DfE, 2014a, p.6) in the EYFS to promote spiritual development, suggesting:

...if the children want to do something, you have to provide them with space and time to experiment with their ideas.

"Physical development" (DfE, 2014a, p.8) is a prime area of learning and development of the EYFS, Kate linked this to nurturing spirituality through the connectedness between mind, body and spirit, as well as health and well-being:

Physical development, self-care, self-awareness...
healthy mind, staying healthy...educating ourselves
to be healthy in our body and our minds...

Anne and Alice both discussed the holistic approaches integrated in the specific area of learning in the EYFS of "Understanding the world" (DfE, 2014a, p.8).

Anne explained:

...it is not just talking to them, it is about talking about it as a whole, the world they live in.

Whereas, Alice focused on celebrations and cultural awareness:

...in the 'Understanding the world' they have this section where we expose them to different celebrations, different you know...so that they have this cultural awareness.

Thereby, the practitioners' interpretation of the policy text proposes promoting children's spiritual development is implicit in the EYFS framework (DfE, 2014a) rather than explicit.

Summary of finding – points for discussion

The practitioners suggest:

1. Promoting spiritual development in the EYFS is implicit in the statutory framework.

2. Nurturing spirituality is woven into the EYFS – within areas of learning and development, specifically: Personal, social and emotional development, Physical development and Understanding the world. In addition, in the overarching principles, the focus of health and well-being, as well as the characteristics of effective teaching and learning.

Having proposed that promoting spiritual development is implied in the EYFS (DfE, 2014a), in the next section the participants shared examples of everyday practice where they propose how spirituality is nurtured.

5.5 What does provision for promoting spiritual development look like in everyday practice?

Practitioners are informed “Each area of learning and development must be implemented through planned, purposeful play and through a mix of adult-led and child-initiated activity” (DfE, 2014a, p.9). Without any explicit guidance to promote spiritual development in early years practice (Early Education, 2012), I used the term ‘everyday practice’ in the field and research questions. Building on from the participants’ evaluation of where the ECE policy framework promotes spiritual development, examples of how this interprets into everyday practice developed into three themes of ‘spiritual environments’, ‘spiritual enablers’ and ‘spiritual barriers’. Reflecting on their diaries in the second and third interviews the practitioners described their methods of recording entries. The method of recording diary entries and the quantity varied. One practitioner chose to write “sticky notes”, two recorded notes in notebooks, two opted to use photographs of activities to remain in the setting and one practitioner preferred to record a list in a “bullet point” format. Sustaining the recording of diary entries and the diary format appeared to be determined by the practitioners’ roles, access to working directly with the children and time restraints.

The environmental discourse encompassed categories of space: home/early years setting; indoor/outdoor experiences. Within these spaces the capacity of the adult’s role in everyday practice to nurture or inhibit spirituality became a focal point. Attention was drawn to the caring role of practitioners in early

years settings, as well as the importance of listening to and hearing the child's voice (HMSO, 2004a; Champagne, 2003). Ruth expressed spirituality "...is just to let children develop in an appropriate environment" describing spiritually nurturing provision in the context of an "enabling environment" (DfE, 2014a, p.6); which responds to 'here and now' moments of learning evolving from children's interests. Ruth reflected:

...giving that time and space to the idea that has developed at that moment of time, I think in my view...is spirituality, because you are giving children an enabling environment, you are providing children... the opportunity to learn, to experiment, to develop their ideas.

Similarly, Kate considered time from the perspective of the pace of children's activities. Focusing on supporting children's mental well-being, building resilience and self-belief, her diary entries reflected on the practitioner as a role model for children in the environment. Alongside providing opportunities for children to express and talk about their feelings and emotions, connecting to the development of respecting others and kindness. Kate also noted spiritually focused practice where children were given time to listen to music, to relax and participate in yoga. Provision where time and pace allow children to reflect in the environment is advocated by Kate:

Giving them time for reflection and just to stop and think about things, not just rushing them constantly to get on and do things...providing opportunities for children to experience time for them to reflect and think about things in their life.

The role of the practitioner in the environment to care and nurture spirituality was also reflected on by Judith who identified the setting as a workplace where spirituality:

...is in my opinion: to follow what I believe is the correct way to care and support...to allow the children to learn to believe in themselves, so that they will be able to identify with their own spirituality.

Trusting reciprocal relationships between the child and practitioners, as well as children feeling secure in the setting to follow their own interests underpins nurturing spirituality in the early years setting for Alice:

...key at birth, spirituality is the trust that they can get from others or the trust they can give to an adult. I think it applies when a child...walks into a nursery, at first the child has to feel secure, he/she can trust the practitioners there...then after that they can feel confident in pursuing their own interests...and then if the practitioner recognises the child's interests, they can help in developing these.

Alice continued to reflect on pedagogy and the importance of encompassing spiritual practice:

In the end the child becomes well developed...holistically he or she will become a happy confident child, instead of just focusing on the education...on the intellect and neglecting the spiritual part...

Continuing the focus on the role of the practitioner, the planning of the environment to foster creativity and imagination, whilst providing opportunities to make choices and for children to follow their interests continued to be exemplified by Alice:

...you must always have activities for them...of course, we plan...but sometimes you need to give them free play so that they can just be creative and be imaginative.

Applying this strategy, to the indoor and outdoor environment, Alice recalled examples of seizing the moment in early years practice for children to experience different weather. These spontaneous activities were supported by children being equipped with appropriate clothing to match the weather to explore the natural environment. Yet, an example of practice given by Alice extends the scope of weather in promoting spiritual development in young children, presenting it as a route for supporting children to articulate feelings and emotions. For example, she recalled that when raining, a child described the clouds as crying and wanted "...to make the clouds feel better". The solution for the child was to sing weather-themed songs for the clouds to hear.

Clouds also became a focus in Anne's practice, where after exploring the outdoors and viewing paintings with sky scenes the children chose to participate in creative activities. Anne explained the children had a wide range of resources to choose from, including paint and sponges. Anne noted:

...the toddlers noticed a rainbow, which we linked in to this. Yesterday they put different colours onto a sponge and then made a rainbow that way, they spread it round. One of the children told me 'I saw the rainbow in the sky – out there'.

Kate also referred to practice where she supported children to explore the weather. Seeing snow coming from the sky for some children was a new experience which stimulated excitement and for some stillness. Leading to "...why questions", Kate reflected:

Yesterday...it snowed, so we played outside and watched the children's excitement and I heard all the 'Wows' and the 'Oh'...when they saw the snowflakes. It was just a picture, because some of them had never seen the snow, so it was a first time experience...they wanted to feel it on their hands...they felt cold and wet and saw it was disappearing and asked...Why is it disappearing?...It was all exciting...happiness...it was just fabulous...the snow melted this morning and there was nothing left.

The children's wonder was exhibited through questioning. Equally, the disappearance of the snow sparked mystery which led the children who had experienced greater snowfall to reflect on these with their peers. When the children went inside the exploration of snow continued, Kate explained:

We looked at pictures on the whiteboard of snow, sledging and skiing and just talked about snow. How do you think it would feel moving on the snow? and What noise will it make when we walk on the snow in our shoes?...They were talking...some of the children had been skiing and have felt the snow before and they were telling the children 'It was up to here'...'We were jumping in the snow'...and again it was about looking at their faces and the look on their face. The excitement and the awe and wonder of what could be and like transporting them into that place.

Outdoor ECE provision, was also recognised as a spiritually promoting environment by Alexandra, as she highlighted the activities, she was aware her child had participated in within the early years setting. Viewing rainbows and playing in the snow in the early years setting were recalled as opportunities to explore the natural world. Combined with family activities at home, exploring mud and puddles, Alexandra focused on supporting her child to build their "...own picture of the world through exploration" and to nurture spirituality to support her child "...to be a free spirit to just blossom and grow into who they want to be". Further to this, the role of play in nurturing spirituality was expressed by Alexandra:

You know when you build from the children's interests...it is like their inner spirituality comes out through play and then the practitioners build upon these interests to create different role play areas.

Continuing the theme of play and interests, Natalie valued communication with the setting as a parent to exchange observations and referred to play in the early years setting. She reflected on seeing children engaged in activities in the early years setting mirroring home experiences, Natalie explained the setting:

...have like a kitchen, a toy kitchen area, I think they call it the home corner and sometimes you can walk in and they are making each other dinner.

This was the first reference to mealtimes in the research interviews focusing on sharing food. Natalie also spoke of conversations at home regarding the Easter Bunny and recalled her child's suggestion "...we can have dinner together and the Easter Bunny can have it". Further reference to mealtimes promoting spiritual development focused on children praying before eating lunch, which two practitioners recalled. The participants also highlighted activities fostering the freedom of children to explore, to make choices and to be heard.

Activities and experiences suggested by the practitioners to promote children's spiritual development are presented in Figure 5.1, these are combined with activities the parents were aware of in the setting.

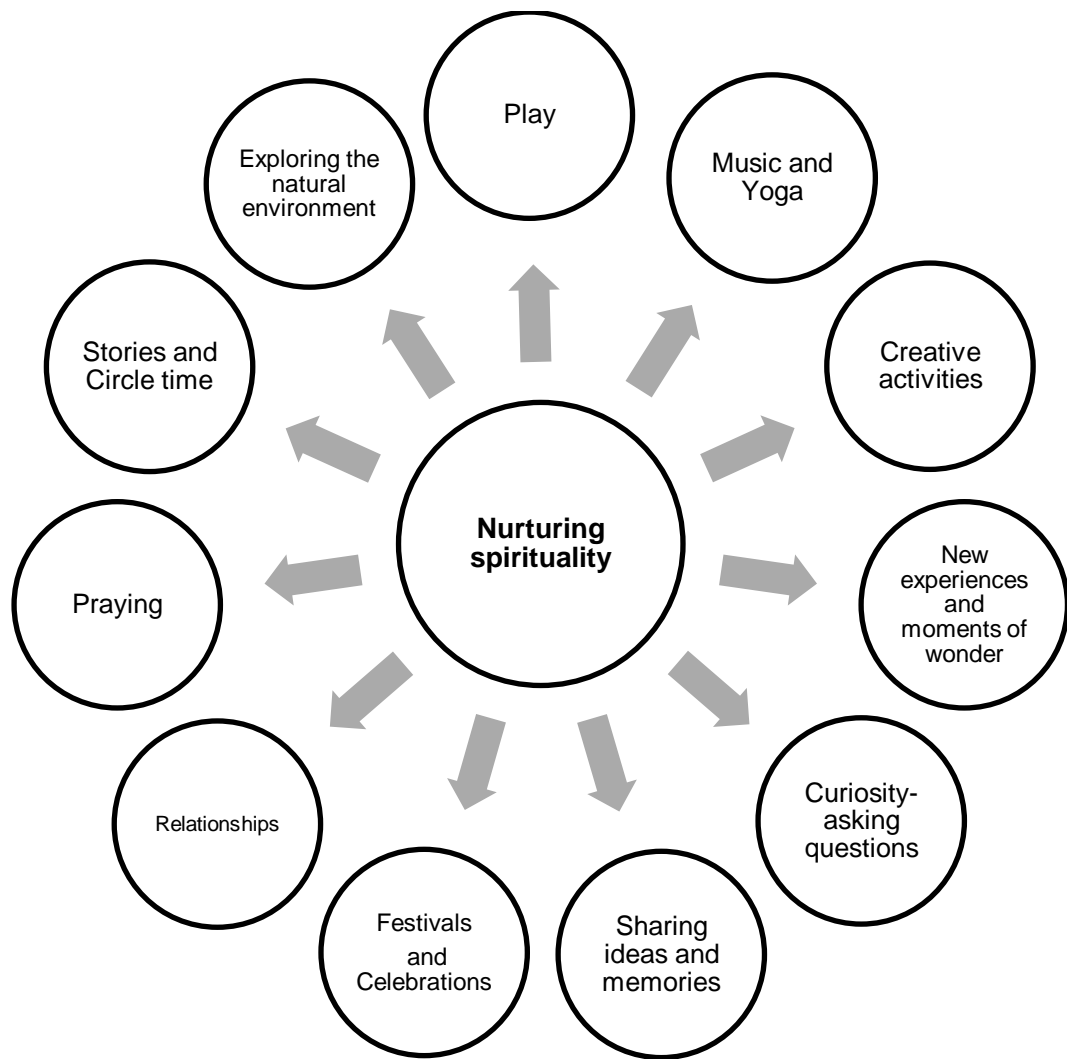


Figure 5.1 Nurturing spirituality – activities and experiences identified by the participants as promoting young children’s spiritual development

Practitioners described activities where young children talk freely, share ideas, ask questions and reflect on memories. Judith elucidated her view of how children’s spiritual development is promoted in the setting raising awareness to social experiences. This included the relationships developed between the key person, child and parents. Strongly advocating the role of the key person to support the child to feel secure, Judith highlighted the importance of getting the child and practitioner pairing right to foster positive relationships. Focusing on the uniqueness of every child Judith explained:

...it is about who they are as an individual. And how we support them to integrate and develop alongside others. This is how I think that spiritual development is promoted, how we support the children in understanding their feelings, their beliefs and of others.

Developing relationships with peers and encouraging talking together in groups to share ideas and to explore emotions was noted by Valerie in a diary extract:

We were having a group discussion and the children were talking about being kind to each other and they expressed emotions.

Valerie explained in the first interview that the early years setting "...is not related to a single faith or religion". In a diary extract she noted the children participate in celebrations and referred to the inclusion of British values in practice:

There are a lot of celebrations and learning and teaching about festivals and faiths and...the British values that we have just seen, and they are being introduced quite a lot. But I think...it is a lot of what we or what adults believe children should learn.

Circle time was also noted in the diary of Kate. Activities preparing for Christmas led to children engaging in a circle time where they focused on families and sharing with others, Kate noted:

...we talked about compassion, talked about children and other families who are not fortunate like us to have a family to share Christmas with or...may not have food on the table...to think about them and to reflect how lucky we are.

Similarly, Alice advocates the spiritual benefits of circle time for children to come together and to reflect on events. She noted, that sometimes children approached practitioners after circle time, to talk one-to-one to share their thoughts. For example, following a discussion of thankfulness, a child wanted to give their favourite toys to children without toys in the community. To nurture spirituality, Alice engaged in listening and responding to young children's curiosity expressed through their questions:

...anything that they are intrigued by or anything they are interested in is all going to imprint in them. It is all going to be part of them spiritually.

Planning activities to support the child's interests, while aiming to provide spiritual moments of wonder, are recommended by Ruth as she reflected on empowering the child 'as leader' and the practitioner's role 'as a facilitator', proposing:

...you have to let children take the lead role when we are setting-up the activities, although adults act as a facilitator, so you don't want to take over the child's imagination whilst they are doing the activity.

Encouraging children to explore the outdoors provided opportunities for the children to express curiosity. Kate described an activity that started with exploring "Autumn":

...we listened to the wind, listened to the birds, all the sounds we can hear. Looking at the colours, the noise the leaves made under our feet...

Then attention was switched by the children to the moon, when one child observed the moon and sun in the sky at the same time. Kate proposed the role of the practitioner is to encourage children to have time to absorb such experiences, thereby raising awareness additionally to children needing time to reflect and think before answering practitioners' open-ended questions. Further spiritually focused activities put forward by Kate embraced tranquillity where children listen to "...meditation music in the background" while they take part in yoga which she described to the children as "... gentle stretching for the mind, soul and the body".

The examples of everyday practice shared by Anne featured exploration, thereby linking what the children explore outside with creativity. Anne expressed the importance of young children exploring the seasons and weather and referred to the Forest School approach (Knight, 2016). This exploration applied across the age ranges of the EYFS. Babies in the outdoor environment looked at blossom, which was followed by an indoor creative activity using their fingers to print patterns with a range of different pink paints. Children in the

setting went on walks with the practitioners to explore and collect leaves to use in printing activities which Anne reflected:

...it was giving them that early experience of awe, wonder and mystery. It is all those things that I think spirituality comes into, giving them that sense of mystery and wonder.

Similarly, treasure baskets with natural materials were explored by the babies, to use all their senses. Opportunities for children to explore the 'self' by looking in the mirror, painting self-portraits were encouraged, and all their paintings were displayed for the children to see and share with their families. Summing up supporting children to explore different materials Anne stated:

I think this does link to spirituality, in the way that you are being able to give children that freedom and choice...to create their own art piece...they wanted to do...

Children's freedom to play, express their views to be heard, to pray, to enjoy celebrations and festivals are spiritual enablers identified by parents. Jay proposed:

...spiritual development is first of all my responsibility as a parent and secondly, the way I grew up...it is the responsibility of the community because it takes a whole village to raise a child...

The importance of children in the early years hearing stories, singing songs, praying as well as going to church and Sunday School were discussed by Jay as nurturing spirituality. Along with children "...knowing the foundation of the country, about the Bible and about their ancestors...this feeds the soul". Jay gave an example of children thinking spiritually in response to seeing "people in need" on television by wanting to pray for them. In the context of nurturing spirituality in the education context, Jay suggested children should:

...be introduced to aspects of spirituality in nursery and schools, to have options of different aspects of spirituality...to know there is something more to life...what makes you a person is more than physical.

To nurture spirituality at home, April advocated the importance of choice and play by asking her child “What shall we do today?” and to spend time talking together to get to know likes and dislikes. Activities in the early years setting had also been observed by April that “...celebrate different cultures and different festivals”. Natalie and Alexandra both described activities with their children at home to prepare for Christmas to encourage fun, imagination and magical thinking. Natalie suggested:

Spirituality - I just think that it is a very important part of childhood and life itself and I just think you know... it is nice to have something to believe in...

Following the suggestions of the scope in the early years to nurture spirituality the participants considered if there were any identifiable barriers with the potential to impede spiritual development. These are presented in the next section.

Summary of finding – points for discussion

1. Scope to promote spiritual development in early years practice is proposed in the outdoor and indoor spaces, in a range of activities across the areas of learning and development of the EYFS.
2. In everyday practice, responding to the opportunities for children to explore the seasons and weather is strongly represented in the data.
3. Facilitating opportunities for children to develop positive relationships, to be curious, imaginative and creative, to experience a sense of awe, wonder and mystery and to engage in reflection.
4. Practitioners’ awareness of the child’s interests in the early years setting, in the home or other environments. Listening to, hearing and responding to the child’s voice, encouraging children to question and to seek answers.
5. Incorporating tranquil activities, practitioners considering the pace of activities and allowing time for children to make choices.

5.6 Potential barriers to spiritual development

The findings so far relate to the notion of nurturing spirituality. The identified spiritual enablers embrace opportunities in everyday practice to support children's spiritual development in ECE provision. Yet to provide a balanced or wider view, potential barriers that have the capacity to hinder nurturing young children's spirituality were considered by the participants. I asked a field question focused on the identification of barriers, if any, that might impede spiritual development.

The participants proposed a broad range of potential barriers and some of these suggested inhibitors which extend beyond early years practice and may have implications for compulsory school education. The difficulty of defining spirituality, the absence of an agreed universal definition of spirituality for ECE and the silence of spirituality in training are perceived barriers for practitioners. Kate and Judith highlighted their spiritual awareness heightened as participants of this study whilst identifying spiritually-focused practice. However, reliance on the personal understanding of spirituality underpinned Kate's interpretation of promoting spiritual development in practice. Without a definition to refer to in the EYFS (DfE, 2014a) Kate proposed:

...when you work with different practitioners, more than one may have a different view about spirituality...it would be difficult to do the planning...

Anne recalled supporting practitioners to develop an understanding of what spirituality means when spiritual terminology appeared new to them or not included in their training. Priestley (2000) uses the phrase "bewitchment of language" (p.114) which leads to accepting rather than questioning meaning. Rewording was the strategy adopted by Anne to provide a clear message that young children can be spiritual and to outline "...it is all about them being able to be curious". Anne followed this advice with reassurance to support practitioners to understand they already nurture spirituality, particularly when they listen to children and answer their questions. In addition, Anne advocates the importance of practitioners applying theory to practice and raised concerns of how some practitioners interpret the EYFS:

I think they look at the EYFS and I think some of them still take everything the EYFS says as that is what it says so that is what we have to do... They feel like they have the EYFS and they know that Ofsted are going to ask them about that, so they feel under pressure to use that, but I don't think that they will have noticed whether there is anything in there about spirituality.

Ruth suggested a possible barrier is triggered by children's challenging behaviour, sometimes experienced in settings, impacting activities for peers:

Because it is very difficult sometimes to accommodate the idea of the group and manage that challenging behaviour in the setting at the same time.

While Anne raised awareness to children wanting to talk in the setting about what they had seen when watching the news on television. She referred to this situation requiring time to listen and reassure the children, Anne proposed "...if they are talking to you about it, they have thought about it". Similarly, promoting listening to the child, Judith suggested children's thoughts "...could be something they have seen on television, something they have seen on a bus". A potential barrier proposed by Judith was summed up in one word "adults". Clarifying this response Judith explained:

So often adults don't extend on why the child believes things, adults are always right, respect your elders, I am the adult you are the child and that straight away is a barrier for a child...I think to develop spirituality...with the children we have influence, so we have to understand that they may have their own beliefs and understanding of certain things and we shouldn't try and change that.

The need for adults to hear the children's voices was advocated by Ruth, who explained when thinking about children's spirituality "...what I was looking at was the child's voice, I think they interlink with each other". Adults and time were also perceived barriers by Alice when children's emotional and spiritual needs are misunderstood. Long periods of time spent on electronic devices and young children expressing boredom added to her concerns. Communicating with practitioners and parents to outline the spiritual benefits of spending time exploring the natural environment is one solution advocated by Alice. However, Alice reflected on early years

courses "...they don't really teach us, practitioners, about accommodating for the spiritual needs" and added this as a barrier. Like Alice, Kate was concerned with children's boredom, "I think as practitioners we do not want children to be bored" and reflected on time restraints as she suggested "We don't give them enough time to just stop and think and take their time".

Working with parents was a key point raised by Valerie while welcoming opportunities to explore parents' views. She described "...a contest at times" arising from differing views of spirituality and "...legislation or what is deemed best for the child". Valerie also suggested "...that is why it might be one of the reasons why spirituality is more geared towards morals and values rather than religion".

Parental concerns related to influences inside and outside of early years provision. Natalie observed that at Christmas, the young child's belief in "Santa" is exposed to comments, for example on television, that oppose and destroy the magical tradition. Natalie thought about the future, possible barriers revolved around differing surroundings, for example children leaving the early years setting to attend primary school and later secondary school:

...sometimes in schools obviously they teach them different things in different ways...I think that is when a barrier might occur when they start asking questions about beliefs and spirituality will kind of change.

A further spiritual barrier suggested by Jay is political correctness who also raised awareness that young children can be misinformed about death. This concern related to children being told "...they are sleeping". April commented on restricting the holding of or expressing personal beliefs, is not allowing the person "...to be their true self", citing this as a potential spiritual barrier. April explained:

I just think spirituality is about being able to be yourself, so whether that is around other people or with yourself. Because some people struggle to be themselves, just for themselves, because they feel they have to put a front on, or they have to say what other people want them to say. I do think you should be able to have your own beliefs, your own opinions, your own thoughts...

Alexandra, reflected on adult influence on children's play in the home and early years settings, suggesting "...a combination of free-flow play and adult-led activities...you have a better balance because it is not all coming from the adults". Yet as can be seen in the following section of this chapter, practitioners working in early years settings experience dilemmas, depending how these are managed these could be added to the list of spiritual barriers.

Summary of finding – points for discussion

1. Different understandings or unfamiliarity of spirituality have the potential to impact planning activities in early years settings.
2. Misconception of spirituality - applying to older children and adults.
3. Pastoral power – adults silencing the spiritual voice.
4. External influence - outside of the home and early years setting.

5.7 Spiritually sensitive moments identified in early years practice

For some young children, their first experiences of death, loss and grief can be connected to family pets (Duffy, 2008). An example of this was reflected on by Anne who recalled supporting a young child through the experience of the death of a pet cat:

It is about talking to them about... 'The cat isn't here'. Some people are just like 'No, the cat died'. To a child, 'The cat died' they have got no realisation about what that means. They are never going to see it again, so it is like preparing them.

Anne was aware of the cat's death and emphasised the importance of demonstrating empathy and truthfulness:

It's about the world around them, about asking questions but listening to children, and also them reflecting on life...when they ask...Where is heaven? What is heaven? And not just to say, 'What do you think it is?' I think it's like this, but what do you think? And get them to speak about heaven.

Adult-directed activities perceived as integral for children to explore feelings and emotions resonated within the data. Kate recalled listening to a child-initiated discussion regarding "...babies can die before they are born" between a group of young children. Children under five searching for meaning, demonstrating their awareness of death and loss within the practitioner's presence. Adams et al. (2008, p.38) refer to the adult's "alertness" and Bone (2008b, p.271) to "spiritual witness", Kate sensitively listened and was ready to answer the children's questions if they arose. However, the data also revealed children's experiences of death, occurring before starting to attend an early years setting, might not be brought to the attention of the practitioners. Alice discussed becoming aware of a child's bereavement through the child's verbal and non-verbal communication. Meeting the child's spiritual needs with openness to listening, not asking intrusive questions were strategies applied in practice.

Children's curiosity of angels was also noted in the diaries and reflections of two practitioners. The first, noted by Alice occurred spontaneously as a child expressed wonder about angels questioning "Where do the angels go?". The second related to an activity planned to celebrate Christmas where a child created an angel out of paper. Having seen an angel someone else had made, Ruth explained the child was adamant this model did not fit their "...idea of angels". On completion of the activity the child was content with the angel they created.

Knowing how to respond when children express worries, concerns and spiritual curiosity, for example in circle times or one-to-one with a practitioner led to the practitioners reflecting on whether promoting young children's spiritual development was embedded in their training. Therefore, training is the focus of the next part of this chapter.

Summary of finding – points for discussion

1. Nurturing young children's spirituality in early years practice requires hearing the child's spiritual voice across the spiritual spectrum, to be attentive to 'waves' of sorrow as well as happiness.
2. Spiritual dilemma – uncertainty of what should be said in response to the child's spiritual voice.
3. Being prepared – the importance of effective communication, working in partnership with parents and families.

5.8 To what extent does the promotion of young children's spiritual development exist in early education and childcare qualification training?

A field question was posed to the six practitioners to explore if promoting children's spiritual development had been studied in their training. Due to none of the practitioners currently studying for qualifications at level 3 the question relied on the participants' recall of that stage of their training. The six practitioners had progressed beyond level 3 and held qualifications ranging from level 5 –7, achieved on a variety of degree programmes in a range of higher education institutions. Five of the practitioners held level 3 qualifications before commencing their degree studies. At the time of the data collection the practitioners had not undertaken training to become "school teachers" (DfE, 2014a, p.23). Whereas, one practitioner had achieved Early Years Professional Status (EYPS).

Valerie did not recall spiritual development being directly taught, but remembered exploring beliefs, religion and culture. Anne remembered studying equality and diversity which related to celebrating festivals. The dialogue continued with Anne's concern about not covering spirituality in training problematises spirituality for practitioners, Anne stated:

...practitioners need something, a foundation to work with. If they don't know anything about it, it is hard for them to go out into the workplace and promote

spirituality if they have not had that taught to them...an understanding of what spirituality is.

Alice experienced a brief reference to being sensitive to children's spiritual needs during her studies and explained:

...this included their cultural awareness, being confident with themselves, being kind to others and just remembering some of the basic history around. I remember when I did my degree, well yes, they did tell us to follow the child's interests, but they don't really explain more about what else you can do to help them to be themselves, instead of us moulding them to be ready for school.

Kate had read about spirituality in undergraduate degree studies which raised her awareness to think about this in practice. Judith recalled spiritual development was covered briefly in degree studies and similarly Ruth who recalled in undergraduate studies:

...nobody really talked about it or explained what it really is. Because you have to really go into it yourself if you are interested to see what it is.

The participants recalled where they remember spirituality being studied in their training for qualification or degree studies. However, this does not reflect contemporary practitioner training at level 3, which suggests the potential of further research to establish the position of spirituality in this context.

Summary of finding – points for discussion

1. Mixed training experience is represented in the data and what must be taken into account is the wide range of qualifications held by practitioners in England.
2. Finding out what promoting spiritual development means in practice is reported by participants to be left to the practitioner to find out what this means. For some of the participants spiritual development was studied in degree programmes and a retrospective view suggests it was not recalled as explicit in earlier training.

3. Concern is raised that if practitioners are not taught what spirituality is, in the ECE context, it is perceived difficult to know how to promote spiritual development in practice.

In the next part of the chapter the relevance of promoting spiritual development is considered in the revised definitions of the practitioner participants.

5.9 What is the relevance of promoting spiritual development in contemporary early years practice in England?

In the final interview the practitioners revisited their definitions of spirituality as they reflected on the spiritual practice they had shared from their diaries. The relevance of promoting spiritual development in young children and spiritual vocabulary was embedded in the responses. The importance of a positive relationship through the connection developed between the practitioner in the key person role of the EYFS and the child resonated through Judith's diary entries and in her revised definition of spirituality:

...if I had one word to sum up spirituality it is 'connection'...I talked to you before about beliefs, what is in here...what is in your heart and that comes from how you have been brought up and your experiences in life...I see it slightly differently now, because I think you can have good connections and not good connections with people and you do spend more time with people that you connect with.

Relationships in the context of practitioner and child interaction, with an aim to support the child's freedom to explore, question and imagine were also of importance in practice to Ruth summing this up as:

...my definition of spirituality is freedom. Give freedom to children's thinking...you have to give children freedom to think for themselves...if they are saying something you extend their thinking, you give them another cue, 'Have you thought about this?' to just give a little hint to the child...guide them...but don't take over the activity, or their imagination.

Anne reflected on what she had recorded in her diary and revisited her definition of spirituality:

I would say now, 'spirituality' is about letting children be free, having freedom of choice. It is about the world that they live in and letting them experience the world they live in...from doing this diary, I can see how important that is to let them experience things and that they do pick up on...like a rainbow. They do notice things like that and sometimes I think we underestimate how much they are aware of the world that they live in.

Magical was included in Kate's revised definition within the continuum of spirituality, summing up spirituality Kate explained:

Something magical that is linked to the body, to the mind, to the spirit...and again I would use the same words I suppose that I described it at the beginning... happiness, joy, life and death...I still find I struggle to describe it. I think it encourages...empathy, questioning, reflection and deeper thinking.

In the final interview, Alice expanded her definition of spirituality that encompasses the concepts of being and purpose, in society and in the world:

I think spirituality means something that is you really, something that matters to you...what is inside, what you like, what you are interested in and then basically how you can make yourself be the best you can be really. And how can you be of benefit to other people. I mean for me, spiritually...it is how you can be beneficial to society and to the world...how you can be a better person than what you are...

Contextualising her definition to practice, Alice suggests how she nurtures spirituality in early years practice:

So, for younger children I believe in what they like, what they are interested in...and then the questions they ask...how can you assist that and how can you expand that?

Revisiting her spirituality definition Valerie reflected on children's beliefs and the practitioner's role in the setting. In practice Valerie suggested:

...allowing children to or appreciating what their culture and religious beliefs are and trying in some way to portray that to other children...or to introduce them to ways of life and what other people might think or feel or do, that might be different to them...

Linked to the uniqueness of every child, Valerie concluded:

...it is about growing as a person...it is also about being encouraging and highlighting individuality because everyone is different and that should be celebrated...

Additional proposed components of spirituality summing up the relevance of promoting spiritual development in early years practice are represented in the practitioners' final comments on spirituality.

Summary of finding – points for discussion

1. The relevance of promoting spiritual development in early years practice, is linked by the participants, to supporting the development of trusting relationships, meaningful connections, freedom to think and question, magical thinking, beliefs and imagination.
2. Spirituality is advocated as respecting the individual, facilitating empathy, questioning, reflection and deeper thinking.
3. Children's developing awareness of the world – is at times underestimated.

5.10 Chapter conclusion

The analysed data presented in this chapter underpins how the parents and practitioners participating in the research define spirituality, which is contextualise with examples of practice, activities and experiences nurturing spirituality in early childhood. In the next

chapter the findings of the policy and documentary analysis, as well as the findings reported in this chapter are discussed with reference to the reviewed literature of Chapter 2.

Chapter 6 Discussion

6.1 Introduction

The research aimed to explore what spirituality means in early years practice to practitioners and parents of young children. In this chapter the documentary and policy analysis findings are conflated with the ten themes of Defining spirituality, Spiritual understanding, Spiritually nurturing environments, Spiritual dilemma, Spiritual connectedness, Spiritual enablers, Spiritual barriers, Nurturing spirituality in the EYFS, Spiritual relevance and the Position of 'spiritual' in training, that emerged from the analysed data presented in the previous chapter. These are discussed and contextualised with the reviewed literature. Watson's (2017) values led spirituality model is integrated into the research theoretical framework presented in Chapter 1, in this chapter I draw on these values to structure the discussion to answer the primary research question: What does spirituality mean to practitioners and parents of young children in contemporary early years practice within the Early Years Foundation Stage of England?

Following this, to justify the theoretical position, I propose that in contemporary early years practice within the EYFS there is scope to nurture spirituality within a 'spiritually enabling environment', where 'spiritual barriers' as well as 'spiritual dilemmas' are identified and acted upon. It is not intended to suggest the findings of this spirituality case study are generalisable (Punch, 2014), the aim of this discussion is to construe the findings and theorisation in the light of the research experience. This includes reflecting on the effectiveness and limitations of the research methods.

Integrated into the discussion, the findings from the policy and documentary analysis of Chapter 4 imply the differences of the position of spirituality between the EYFS (DfE, 2017a; 2014a) and the primary National Curriculum (DfE, 2013a). Applying the notion of viewing policy in context, the accessibility of "ensembles of policies" (Ball, 1993, p.15) are considered through comparing the direct access to legislation within the online documents of the EYFS (DfE, 2017a; 2014a) and the primary National Curriculum (DfE, 2013a). Drawing on

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) macrosystem, macro-level policy and practice guidance, the discourse scrutinises the policy divergence surrounding promoting children's spiritual development in early education in England. Whilst considering children's rights to spiritual development (Sagberg, 2017; UNICEF, 1989), the findings generated from the policy analysis highlight the spiritual policy gap between the maintained and PVI sectors of early childhood education. This leads to the proposal of the implications for practice, policy and research. Discussed in the next section is the absence of spiritual terminology in the EYFS and the impact on the research.

6.2 Searching for spiritual understanding in the Early Years Foundation Stage Framework

The participants defined spirituality, although the data indicates some of the participants found it difficult to condense their meaning into one definition. A single spirituality definition according to Nye (2009) "can only capture one part of the picture" (p.2), and as demonstrated in the reviewed literature there are many proposed published definitions and descriptions of spirituality and spiritual development (de Souza, 2016; Watson, 2016; Thatcher, 1992). Noteworthy, is the participants made no reference to published definitions, except one practitioner quoted from Dowling's (2010) text to contextualise spiritually-focused practice recorded in diary extracts.

The participants' proposed understanding of spirituality incorporates "spiritual diversity" (Watson, 2017, p.12), thereby for some participants the possibility of differences between individual's understanding of spirituality and the scope of defining spirituality in more than one way is illustrated. Yet, this is problematic in early years practice as there is evidence in the data raising concerns that without a definition or exemplification, when practitioners have different understandings of spirituality, planning activities to promote young children's spiritual development is perceived as difficult. This finding supports Eade's (2005) proposal that practitioners want a definition to clarify what spirituality and spiritual development means. Adams et al. (2016, p.763) propose where no spirituality definition is presented for practitioners a misconception can arise, "anything and everything is relevant". A pedagogical approach attempting to

comply with policy. Wood (2017) notes ECE policy has the capacity to position practitioners as “compliant technicians” (p.111). When promoting children’s spiritual development is explicit in ECE policy in England, for example as stated in the Education Act 2002 (HMSO, 2002), compliance is measured in an inspection framework using a definition proposed in guidance by the inspectorate (Ofsted, 2017; 2015a; 2006; 2004a; 2004b). How ideal this guidance is in the early education context, and what alternative guidance is available for practitioners, provides scope for further research. However, practice guidance should not be viewed as a tick list to be used in the administration of a “performance” pedagogical model (Neaum, 2016, p.247) focused on predefined outcomes. Nutbrown (2012, p.19) in the review of early education and childcare qualifications states:

All babies and children are different, and working with them should never be a matter of ‘ticking boxes’ – reducing the complexities of children’s developing minds, bodies and emotions to a set of simplistic targets and statements.

Spirituality could therefore be added to Nutbrown’s (2012) statement, principally if spirituality is only viewed in a compliance context, lack of spiritual reference in ECE policy risks practitioners overlooking children’s spirituality. This is especially if the policy is interpreted within the mindset that if it is not written down in practice guidance it does not matter. I suggest the findings of this study however, support the view that despite practice guidance resources of the EYFS (Early Education, 2012) containing no explicit references to promote spiritual development since 2012 it is implicit within the statutory framework (DfE, 2017a; 2014a). This is discussed in the next section.

6.3 Interpreting policy – transforming the implicit to explicit in practice

Discontinuity of any overt references to spirituality (Foucault, 2002a), since 2012 in ECE macro-level policy guidance in England is troubling, especially as spiritual well-being had prominence in preceding practice guidance. The Foundation Stage provided “a distinct identity” (QCA, 2000, p.3) for a funded stage of pre-compulsory education, one policy for two sectors of ECE. Nonetheless, the curriculum guidance (QCA, 2000) as written, assumed practitioners working in early years settings across the PVI sector as well as the

maintained sector were aware of the meaning of 'spiritual'. Paradoxically, when spiritual development was explicit in the Foundation Stage as Goodliff (2016) argues the curriculum guidance "failed to exemplify" (p.69) what it meant. This leaves the interpretation open to practitioners, which may differ across the sectors (Wood, 2017) and between practitioners in a setting. Furthermore, parents and practitioners' perspectives of spiritual may differ. Contrasting to other aspects of development, Nutbrown (2018) suggests "Perhaps because of its characteristically ethereal nature...spirituality evades the jargon of clear definition" (p.46). Promoting pupils' spiritual development was not new to the maintained sector, SCAA's (1995) guidance aimed at demystifying spiritual development in maintained schools and Ofsted's 2004 published definition included the Foundation Stage (Ofsted, 2004a). McCreery's study (1996) reflects the interest of spirituality in the Reception year of primary school. Whereas, it is unclear whether PVI settings received guidance beyond the inspection framework (Ofsted, 2004a; 2004b) or whether spirituality was covered in all practitioner training programmes underpinning qualifications.

Yet the finding of this study is the six practitioners suggest nurturing spirituality is implicit in the EYFS (DfE, 2014a), identifying components of the statutory framework where promoting spiritual development is inferred. Fairclough (2003, p.11) refers to "meaning-making" of text, interpreting the explicit, the implicit and assumed. Without spiritually related vocabulary to hook onto, such as joy, peace, beliefs, used in past ECE policy documents (QCA, 2000; SCAA,1996) or indeed any of the S words (Kimes-Myers, 1997) listed in Chapter 1, promoting spiritual development is difficult to find. Predominantly, four key components of the EYFS (DfE, 2014a) were identified by the participants as supporting the spiritual dimension of early childhood. First within the socio-cultural EYFS guiding principles, second the key person role in the context of positive relationships, and third the characteristics of effective teaching and learning. The fourth component, the areas of learning and development of PSED and Understanding the World, were cited frequently in the data as nurturing spirituality. Whilst not specifically mentioned by name by the participants, some of the suggested activities proposed also link spirituality to "Expressive

arts and design” (DfE, 2014a, p.8), which is aligned with McVittie’s (2013) analysis of the 2012 version of the EYFS framework (DfE, 2012). It is mystifying, if promoting spiritual development can be analysed as implicit or hidden in a policy why it is not made transparent.

Beginning with the focus of the developing child at the centre of practice (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), locating implicit references to spirituality in policy appears to be underpinned by the practitioners’ beliefs and perspectives of spirituality, their knowledge of child development and their understanding of the spiritual dimension of childhood. In the policy context, viewing the policy framework as Wood (2017) describes as “open and flexible” (p.111), there seems to be scope for providing empowerment for reflective practitioners to apply theoretical approaches to practice, within the boundaries of policy compliance. Early years settings in England are however diverse, some are faith affiliated and some follow the principles of early childhood education pioneers (Froebel, Montessori and Steiner), their policies may therefore provide explicit spiritual guidance to use alongside the EYFS framework. Indeed, one practitioner participant referred to the spiritual principles of Montessori underpinning the practice in the setting. Having located promoting spiritual development in the policy underpinning early years practice, the next section of this chapter outlines the role of the artefacts which opened the spiritual dialogue of the research.

6.4 Expressing the meaning of spirituality - evaluating the role of the artefacts in the study

The reveal of the artefact selected by each participant preceded their constructed definitions of spirituality in the interviews. Denscombe (2014, p.194) recommends using “trigger or stimulus material” to move the interview from the background information stage. Mata’s (2014) study illustrates how researcher-selected resources were given to teacher candidates to induce spirituality discussions. McCreery’s (1996) study of spirituality with child participants also demonstrates the use of researcher-selected photographs and stories. I propose the artefacts in this study, presented in Chapter 5, became a ‘spiritually connecting tool’, a bridge to commence the dialogue in the

interviews, thereby creating a spiritual space. I call them this for two reasons, first the role of the artefact was greater than an “ice breaker” (Prosser, 2011, p.484) because each artefact was chosen by the participant prior to the interview for a specific purpose to represent their spiritual understanding. This method empowered the participants to take the lead in the interviews and to express their understanding of spirituality without influence. Photographs and objects according to Prosser (2011) potentially “evoke as well as create collective and personal memory” (p.484), spiritually the artefacts represented relational connectedness.

The second reason is reflexive (Wellington, 2015), regarding the emotive impact experienced in the interviewer role. I was unaware if an artefact was present in an interview until the point of reveal, despite some of the participants wearing them. In the field notes of the first interview of the research, I noted a moment of personal apprehension, uncertain of the response to the invitation of selecting an artefact to bring to the interview as there was no visible clue of their presence. Reflecting after the interview, in the field notes, I questioned if this induced mystery, contextualised to “fascination and wonder” (Nye and Hay, 1996, p.11). A pattern also noted in the field notes is the artefacts that were not worn, at this point in the interview were positioned underneath the participants’ interview schedules which contained their own notes to refer to in the interview. The reveal of artefacts by participants in the research could therefore be likened to ‘show and tell’ activities experienced by young children in early years settings. Thereby, young children’s treasured toys, objects, drawings and photographs shared in ‘show and tell’ activities may also reflect a spiritual connection through the child’s associated memories. This is a consideration for future research.

The realisation of the artefact as a potential identifier of the participant became apparent in the two pilot studies. Prosser (2011, p.493) refers to “ethical conundrums” existing in visual research. Reflecting on the promise of anonymity and confidentiality (BERA, 2011), led to a field question added into the interviews with the participants to explore if the practitioner or parent considered the artefact to be a source of identification, especially those that

were worn. Specific qualities of the artefacts once revealed, where they were externally worn for example, indicated the potential identifiable characteristics. Another factor influencing the decision to disconnect the artefact from the pseudonym relates to the research design. In the settings where parents volunteered to participate in the research this meant there was more than one participant in the setting, this signalled the ethical need to revisit possible identifiable factors. Sensitivity informed “ethical reflexivity” (Prosser, 2011, p.493) and I reflected on the optional status of the artefacts and their purpose in the research. Placing pseudonyms against the artefacts in this study would identify the participants who chose not to reveal or describe one in their interviews. Therefore, the identifiable characteristics of artefacts in research need to be considered in-depth in the context of anonymity in the research design, the ethics review and within the ongoing consent process. One final point regarding the artefacts, where artefacts were not selected or present in the interview the participants led the dialogue for their “spiritual voice” (Watson, 2017, p.12) to be heard. As stated in Chapter 5, one participant explained they did not need an artefact because they connected natural environments to spirituality. Overall, the consideration of whether to bring an artefact to the interview provided scope for the participants to focus on their understanding of spirituality, which is discussed in the following section.

6.5 Defining spirituality

The participant-constructed definitions of spirituality are comprised of many components. These represented beliefs and faith (Wright, 2005), values (Eaude, 2005), awareness of something greater (Layard and Dunn, 2009; McCreery, 1996), searching for meaning (Reynaert, 2014; Hunt 2009), relationships (Adams et al., 2016), well-being (Meggitt, 2001), curiosity and imagination (Goodliff, 2013; Nye and Hay, 1996) and wonder (Schein, 2014; Bone, 2008b). Viewed collectively, the components of the participants’ definitions of spirituality match to the proposed aspects of spiritual development of the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority (SCAA, 1995). In addition, two participants express a reference to the invisible and untouchable spiritual dimension, which is congruent with the proposition of Locke (1997) and the non-material aspect of Ofsted’s (2004a) spiritual development definition. Moreover,

strongly resonating within the participants' definitions of spirituality is the theme of connectedness (de Souza, 2012), which commenced in the narratives justifying the selection of the artefacts.

First, connectedness is expressed through awareness of the inner self within thoughts, beliefs, feelings and emotions, the spiritual human element defining the 'me' or the 'you of you' and as April suggests 'you are your spirit'.

Recognising the self as a unique human being can be interpreted on de Souza's (2012) proposed relational continuum reflecting spirituality as "the individual Self is separate from everything that is Other" (p.292). As noted in the literature there is a growing tendency for people to identify themselves as spiritual (de Souza, 2016; Nye, 2009). While in the spiritual discourse, many different phrases evolve as qualifiers to contextualise spirituality, for example, Pridmore and Pridmore (2004, p.27) refer to "spiritual distress" and Champagne (2003, p.43) to the "spiritual child". In addition, Harris (2007, p.267) refers to "spiritual awakening" which implies attentiveness of the self to spirituality.

Hunt (2001) advocates the importance of incorporating a spirituality focus in reflective practice within lifelong learning. Building on the notion of the spiritual awareness of the educator (Harris, 2007), is Judith's discovery of the 'spiritual person' and finding the 'spiritual me', while engaged in reflecting on what spirituality means for this research and on her life experiences. The findings of Mata-McMahon et al. (2018) point towards the teachers' spirituality as a teacher resource and to nurture the child's spirit the educator must nurture their own spirituality. Champagne (2003, p.52) proposes "Caring for the spiritual life of children might in turn enhance our awareness of our own spiritual life". Raising awareness subsequently to the spiritual dimension of life and focusing on nurturing the spiritual lives of the children in the early years settings could therefore be considered a catalyst to discover the 'spiritual person'. From this perspective, I propose that a heightened focus on the spiritual dimension of childhood in ECE policy, bringing spiritual terminology back to the practitioners' gaze, might also stimulate reflective practitioners to stop and think how the practitioner can support the child's 'spiritual me' in early years practice.

Second, connectedness to others in the formation of young children's relationships in the early years setting is also prominent in the participants' understandings of spirituality. Nye (2009) advocates the need to evaluate practices in the spiritual context; providing, as mentioned in Chapter 2, six criteria as a guide for spiritual practice. All six criteria are identifiable in the data, essentially the criteria of relationship, intimacy and trust (Nye, 2009) are alerted to in the notion of attachment within the participants' definitions. Alice for example, proposes the need for reciprocal 'trust' from birth, to provide security for the child to support the formation of attachments and holistic development. Love and attachment are also strongly represented in the data with the concept of belongingness. Surr (2011) argues that early attachments are "spiritually significant" (p.137) developing for example, lasting relationships, faith, trust, exploration and wonder.

In addition, Schein (2014) argues "innate traits of spiritual development are nurtured beginning with love and attachment" (p.83). Layard and Dunn (2009) categorise love and attachment as a child's basic needs. Both love and the importance of belongingness are discussed in Chapter 1 as needs identified in Maslow's (1943) human motivation theory. Living in love, forms part of Thatcher's (1992) spirituality definition, presented in Chapter 2. However, love holds a similar position in EYFS policy to spirituality, as it is not specifically mentioned within the text (DfE, 2017a; 2014a). In contrast, attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969) underpins the mandatory key person role of the practitioner within the EYFS (Page and Elfer, 2013; Elfer et al., 2012).

Fundamentally, a child's sense of belonging, developed through positive relationships with peers and practitioners in the setting, has the capacity to build the foundations of connectedness to others outside of the home (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), their happiness (Layard and Dunn, 2009), well-being (Roberts, 2010) and, I propose, to nurture spirituality. Where promoting children's spiritual development is explicit in international curricula, the concept of belonging is strongly featured, for example in the Early Years Learning Framework of Australia (Australian Government Department of Education,

Employment and Workplace Relations, 2009) and the early childhood curriculum, Te Whāriki in New Zealand (Ministry of Education, 2017; 1996). Although, spiritual development was not explicitly mentioned in the Birth to Three Matters framework, within the aspect of “A Strong Child” (DfES, 2002, p.8) promoting a sense of belonging was transparent.

In contrast, a concern for the potential spiritual impact of disconnected relationships between the child and key person, which has implications for transition strategies in early years settings, is shown in the data. Unhappiness, loneliness and boredom are associated with disconnectedness, which de Souza (2012) suggests “reflect a state of being where the nurturing of the individual’s spiritual self is being impeded” (p.297). I mentioned attachment underpinning the key person role earlier, and another concept to consider is ecological transition (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Ecologically, the young child commencing a new setting enters a different ecological environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), a strange environment at first with unfamiliar people. Consequently, strategies to support children’s transition are planned in early years settings (DfE, 2017a; 2014a). Getting the match right when allocating a key person is advised in the data and supported with the argument of the notion of ‘good’ and ‘not good’ connections between people. Primarily, the key person, child and parent relationships are valued by the participants, in the spiritual sense fostering human relationships and connectedness within the early years setting.

Third, awareness of something greater which forms part of the spiritual definitions of Layard and Dunn (2009) and McCreery (1996) through connectedness is represented in the participants’ definitions of spirituality. Contextualised to connections beyond human relationships, in the data generated from the artefacts and within some of the participants’ definitions, is the importance of human connectedness to the universe (Mata, 2014), to faith and to a relationship with God (Wright, 2005; Thatcher, 1992). Environmentally, the spiritual qualities through connectedness to nature, similar to the findings of Schein (2014), within exploration of natural environments is also emphatic.

Freedom is associated with spirituality, it appears in de Souza’s (2012) list of components noted by researchers as underpinning the concept of spirituality.

I analysed the prominence of the notion of freedom in the findings, applied to the child's spirit in the concept of 'free spirit'. In addition, strongly evidenced in the data is the participants' support for freedom for children to play and explore in the natural environment. Freedom can be interpreted in this context using Froebel's (2005), Montessori's (1995; 1967) and Steiner's (2013; 1998) spiritual principles. Thereby the participants advocate that young children's spirituality is nurtured within the freedom to play and to explore the natural outdoor environment (Froebel, 2005; Steiner, 1998). This includes freedom to complete activities without adult intervention and for children to be free to make choices (Montessori, 1995; 1967), and freedom to believe in traditional and imaginative stories, as well as fairy tales (Steiner, 2013).

The meaning of spirituality to the participants, is not only confined to their definitions as it is represented throughout the data. Given the opportunity to revisit what spirituality means to the practitioners in their final interviews, some additions were made to those proposed in the early stage of the data collection. This enabled additional reflection on the relevance of promoting spiritual development in practice. Having identified their own spiritual practice, while spending time reflecting on activities that were planned or adult-directed, contributed to analysing the relevance of promoting spiritual development in early years practice. Freedom, connection to others, magical thinking, imagination and beliefs, underpinned some of the revised views of spirituality. Also evident was the notion of linking spirituality to being a better person as well as beneficial to the world, and children's awareness of the world is added.

On reflection, if a focus group had been formed the group "synergy" (Wellington, 2015, p.242) might have provided the opportunity to construct a collaborative definition. Inspired by the participant proposed notion of spirituality is "an umbrella of different things", combining the concepts proposed in the definitions I have summarised in Figure 6.1 what spirituality means to the participants:

<p>Searching for meaning – questioning of life</p> <p>Personal – means different things to different people</p> <p>Inate – the inner self, identity</p> <p>Relational - connecting self to others and something greater/the universe/God</p> <p>Imagination – magical thinking, creativity</p> <p>Transcendence</p> <p>Underpinned by beliefs and values</p> <p>Awe, wonder and mystery</p> <p>Linked to the mind, body, spirit/soul</p> <p>Invisible – ‘something like an energy’</p> <p>The ‘spiritual me’ – who am I?</p> <p>You are ‘your spirit’ – being aware of the spirit</p>

Figure 6.1 What spirituality means – constructed from the participants’ descriptions and definitions presented in Chapter 5

The participants’ meaning of spirituality continued to be presented in their suggestions of spiritually nurturing environments, which are discussed next.

6.6 Hearing young children’s spiritual voices in spiritually nurturing environments

A finding is the participants’ high regard for accessible outdoor space in early years provision for children to explore the natural environment. This was valued alongside practitioners following the children’s interests in adult-directed and child-initiated activities to nurture spirituality. Mata-McMahon et al. (2018) found in their research, the respondents commented on “connection to nature” (p.10), contextualising nature in the capacity of a learning tool and providing opportunities to appreciate beauty in the environment. In addition, Schein’s (2014) study findings suggest many outdoor activities are provided by practitioners to explore nature that have the potential to promote spiritual development. The analysed data in Chapter 5 exemplifies outdoor activities revealed by the participants, that illustrate planned and spontaneous opportunities for young children to

explore the weather and seasonal changes in the natural environment of the early years settings.

Furthermore, aligned with Mata's (2014) findings, natural resources from the outside environment are brought into the inside environment for children to explore further, thereby the outdoor learning space facilitated exploration, observing and collecting natural resources. Leading to further exploration in the indoor environment, integrating the resources into creative activities, which can be analysed as children recording their findings (Wood, 2010), printing with leaves for example. As the practitioners' planning was not included as "documents" (Wellington, 2015, p.210) for analysis in this research, I draw awareness to the children's learning that can therefore be associated with exploring environments contextualised to the EYFS early learning goal of the specific area of learning, Understanding the World, as it states:

The world: children know about similarities and differences in relation to places, objects, materials and living things. They talk about the features of their own immediate environment and how environments might vary from one another. They make observations of animals and plants and explain why some things occur, and talk about changes. (DfE, 2014a, p.12)

In spite of this early learning goal containing no explicit spiritual reference, its association with nature, developing an understanding of caring for living things and the environment can be analysed as facilitating ecological interest. In early childhood, playing and learning in the natural environment within a moral compass, developing an understanding of what is right and wrong, contextualised to caring for the environment and living things, provides opportunities for young children to explore their world to facilitate ecological consciousness. In the data, connections between spiritual and moral development are interpretable in some of the participant definitions, similar to the findings of Eade (2005). While discussing Christian spirituality, environmental issues and the impact of consumerism, Pope Francis (2015) refers to "ecological spirituality" (p.102) explaining his interest is "...in how such a spirituality can motivate us to a

more passionate concern for the protection of our world” (p.102). Clear links to values, kindness, empathy and respecting the beliefs of other people is also evident in the data relating to the relevance of promoting spiritual development. These components along with morals, compassion and forgiveness match the findings of Mata-McMahon et al. (2018) who report teacher values and virtues applied in nurturing children’s spirituality.

Schein (2014, p.87) refers to “spiritual moments in and with nature”, which encompasses children building relationships with nature and caring for living things. One spiritual moment described by a participant of Schein’s (2014) research relates to children’s reactions to snow. Similarly, Kate recorded in a diary extract the children’s fascination and moments of wonder and stillness as they experienced snow falling from the sky for the first time. Leading to the children more experienced with snow to reflect on past experiences of seeing and playing in snow. Applying a socio-cultural theoretical perspective (Vygotsky, 1978), more knowledgeable peers in the group shared their knowledge of snow. Yet, these significant moments for children can be missed in early years settings, overlooked or perceived differently by people not sharing the experience. In the early years setting, I suggest spiritually focused practice, underpinned by spiritual attunement, has the potential to nurture young children’s spiritually significant moments. Thereby, these practices and experiences foster the capacity to support children’s development of wonder, inner peace (Layard and Dunn, 2009) and transcendence.

6.7 Looking up to the sky - a spiritually nurturing resource

The purpose of the diary in this study aimed for practitioners to identify spiritually focused practice, interestingly standing out significantly in the findings is the sky as a spiritually-enriching resource. These moments included children looking upwards, observing on one occasion the sun and moon together in the day and viewing rainbows in outdoor activities. Such moments provoked wonder and mystery, leading the ‘why’ questions (Nye and Hay, 1996). The findings of young children studying rainbows concur with Giesenberg’s (2000) study. Demonstrated additionally in the data in

Chapter 5 is the awareness of parents of their children's engagement in outdoor activities that are observed and recorded by practitioners in the setting.

The field questions focusing on everyday practice prompted the participants to evaluate the spiritual benefits of both indoor and outdoor activities within the notion of spiritual enablers. Reference to the sky relates to clouds, firstly children engaging in stimulating creative activities supported with viewing the paintings of artists. Secondly, viewed from the indoor environment, a child viewing clouds on a rainy day through the early years setting window suggesting the clouds are sad and crying. In addition, a wide range of indoor activities proposed to promote spiritual development related to 'circle times' focused on children exploring and reflecting on emotions and relationships, underpinned by practitioners fostering emotional well-being and emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1996). These activities firmly position the nurturing of spirituality implicitly within the prime area of learning and development of PSED (DfE, 2017a; 2014a; DCSF, 2008d) which is aligned with the proposal of Adams et al. (2016).

What is clear is the child viewing the cloud from the window verbally expressed their thoughts and concerns to the practitioner and wanted to make the cloud happy. The spiritually-attuned practitioner listened to the spiritual voice (Watson, 2017; Adams et al., 2016) and the child found a solution to attempt to make the cloud happy through singing. Thereby the findings support Champagne's (2003, p.45) argument in the context of nurturing spirituality by listening to the young child both verbally and "...what they communicate with their whole body and person". Listening to and hearing the children's spiritual voices (Watson, 2017; Adams et al., 2016), spiritual witness (Bone, 2008b), and recognising the spiritual voice in spiritually focused practice all have the capacity to support children searching for meaning.

6.8 Nurturing young children's spirituality – the role of play and using all the senses

Evidenced also in the data is the importance of not confining discovery to one sense, activities to encourage children to use their senses to see, smell, hear and touch are advocated. In contrast, activities in everyday practice involving taste, for example snack and mealtimes in the early years settings or baking activities were not evidenced in the data which differs from Bone's (2005) study. A generalisation however must not be made here that activities involving taste do not take place in EYFS settings (DfE, 2014a), nevertheless no direct reference to everyday practice, such as snack, mealtimes or activities using real food and drink appeared in the data. Where practitioners referred to lunchtime the focus was supporting children participating in saying prayers, this was recalled by a participant who had previously worked in a faith affiliated setting and by another participant who supported children in a secular setting to pray before eating their meal.

In contrast, where food is mentioned in the data it relates to young children's role play and make-believe, suggesting the spiritual qualities of play (Froebel, 2005). Children playing in different roles, preparing and sharing imagined meals exhibiting what Goodliff (2013, p.1066) describes as "relational connections" observed in role play, bringing home experience and relationships into their play. Within Bronfenbrenner's (1979) mesosystem which includes the "interrelations between two or more settings" (p.25) the children integrate experiences from home into activities in the early years setting. Where parent participants linked play to nurturing spirituality, they had observed their children engaged in making meals during play at home or in the early years setting.

Permeating the practitioners' accounts of their role in the environment to nurture spirituality is an identifiable professional attribute, which is receptiveness to spontaneous situations. Responding to, for example, the learning potential of weather changes to provide activities of interest for the children with the capacity to nurture spirituality. Neaum (2016, p.247) discusses a "Competence" pedagogical model where the child is viewed

as an individual in a child-centred approach requiring the teacher to engage “a high level of autonomy” (p.267). I propose the practitioners’ spiritual awareness facilitates a spiritually-rich environment in the early years setting to nurture children’s spirituality. This encompasses respecting children’s individual interests and curiosity, what the children experience through their senses and encourages the children to ask questions rather than to be questioned.

Revealed further in the data is practitioner awareness to the spiritual benefits of tranquillity in early years settings, planned activities for children to listen to and respond to music and to participate in yoga. Nye and Hay’s (1996) category of spiritual sensitivities of awareness sensing includes “tuning” (p.146) described as an “awareness which arises in heightened aesthetic experience” (p.146) which can be associated with listening to music. Reflection, meditation and yoga were noted to be embedded in early years practice by practitioners in Mata’s (2014) study. Additionally, Mata-McMahon et al. (2018, p.8) reported yoga as one of four types of “contemplative practices” teachers use to draw on their own spirituality in practice. Mata-McMahon et al. (2018) also reflect on music in their study, in the context of “creative expression” (p.11), it is reported to be an activity used by some of the teachers to nurture spirituality, to support relaxation and concentration.

In contrast, emerging from the data in Chapter 5 is a concern however, noted by the practitioner participants regarding apprehension of the pace and timing of activities, suggesting a rushed approach to fit everything into the day occurs in some EYFS settings. Children may also express boredom, which has the capacity to disconnect (de Souza, 2012) and isolate. This leads to a discussion on perceived barriers that have the capacity to impede spiritual development in early childhood.

6.9 Potential spiritual barriers

Spirituality matters in the early years (Watson, 2017), this is a key finding of this study and aligns with the research findings of Greenfield (2018), Mata-McMahon et al. (2018), Mata (2014), Schein (2014), Goodliff (2013), Bone

(2005), Eade (2005), Champagne, (2003), Giesenberg (2000) and McCreery (1996). Similarly, Adams et al. (2016), Dowling (2014), McVittie (2013) and Nye (2009) all highlight the importance of nurturing young children's spirituality. Even if not mentioned directly in practice guidance (Early Education, 2012), the participants in this study suggest in everyday practice young children's spiritual development is promoted. Yet a deeper understanding of what spirituality means in early years practice emerged within the data where potential barriers perceived to hinder children's spiritual development are identified.

As mentioned earlier, lack of exemplification in policy of what spiritual development means in practice is viewed as problematic for planning activities. This tension was also raised by Adams et al. (2016) and Goodliff (2016). I propose, this forms a spiritual barrier in practice from the perspective that nurturing spirituality is left to chance. On the one hand, Ofsted (2017; 2015a) provides guidance to begin to lift this barrier, however there was no specific reference to this Ofsted guidance in the empirical data. On the other hand, Ofsted's (2017) inspection guidance is to be used across the education stages of maintained schools, which potentially leaves promoting spiritual development open to guesswork. Such an approach, potentially attracts an 'anything goes' pedagogical approach (Adams et al., 2016).

Raising the barrier higher, the absence of spiritual terminology in the EYFS and removing explicit spiritual references from ECE practice guidance (Early Education, 2012) but highlighting the child's right to spiritual development in the National Curriculum (DfE, 2013a) can be misconstrued as suggesting that children's rights to develop spiritually is reserved for compulsory school education. Especially when a critical policy shift (Rivzi and Lingard, 2010) in the 2008 EYFS review (DfE, 2012; DfE, 2011) removed the overarching aim of the EYFS from promoting the Every Child Matters framework outcomes (DCSF, 2008a; DfES, 2004) and spiritual development from practice guidance (Early Education, 2012), replaced with the new focus on a school readiness agenda (Neaum, 2016). Nevertheless, having searched for spiritual references in policy (Chapter 4), I now question: why should nurturing children's spirituality in early childhood be dependent on legislation? When Rumbold (DES, 1990) proposed that promoting spiritual development is part of the agreed objectives of ECE and

children's spiritual rights are embedded in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNICEF, 1989). Adams et al. (2016) suggest "children in any classroom may be of a variety of faiths and/or none" (p.761), this is similar in early years provision. It is therefore essential for the meaning of spirituality or spiritual development in ECE policy to reflect the plurality of a multi-faith and diverse society. Thereby encompassing the key values of spirituality proposed by Watson (2017) of "spiritual diversity and inclusivity" (p.12). Therefore, I argue for spiritual language to be present in the national ECE policy framework to keep spirituality in the gaze of policy-makers and stakeholders.

Putting policy to one side, to be discussed further later in the chapter, resonating through the data is the role of the adult in providing spiritually enabling environments to nurture children's spirituality. For example, a potential spiritual barrier identified by a practitioner relates to the behaviour of some children in the early years setting, described as "challenging" in the data, leading to the practitioner focus to centre on managing the behaviour. This caused the opposite to "tranquil moments" (Ofsted, 2004b, p.49) or calmness (Mata, 2014) in the setting, with the capacity to restrict children's ideas through stopping the flow of the activity and reducing sustained interest.

The participants and the reviewed literature in Chapter 2 embrace the spiritual lives of children, in contrast, Adams et al. (2008) note the misunderstanding believed by some people is that spirituality is reserved for adults. A misconception that is represented in the data, suggesting practitioners are not always aware that young children have the capacity to be spiritual. There is a possibility this reflects the disappearance of spiritual reference in practice guidance, the non-representation of spiritual in holistic development definitions and the erosion from text in level 2 and level 3 early educator training resources. If spiritual development is reinstated overtly in policy documents specific to early years practice in England, perhaps spiritual dialogue in settings, between practitioners as well as practitioners and parents may increase or emerge. The study by Mata-McMahon et al. (2018) in secular settings, suggests spirituality forms part of the hidden curriculum. Confusingly, a major challenge especially for practitioners planning to work in settings with a legal

obligation to promote spiritual development in a cross-curricular approach (HMSO, 2002) is that they are not informed of this requirement in the EYFS statutory framework (DfE, 2017a; 2014a). As a result, promoting spiritual development might be perceived in this context as part of the hidden curriculum.

The data raises the issue of whether adults in their responses to children have the capacity to hinder spiritual development, reflecting on the spiritual barrier of hierarchical power, where the child is the listener and the adult knows best.

Reyneart (2014, p.179) notes “By caring for and nurturing the spirituality of the children, parents and other caregivers can have influence over the life of children” and discusses the notion of how “pastoral power” (Foucault, 2007, p.126) can be abused. Mata-McMahon et al. (2018) discuss the concept of the teachers’ spirituality “as a teacher resource” (p.15) in secular settings.

Practitioners as caregivers may differ in their understanding of spirituality from the children’s parents, it might also be viewed by some parents as a matter for parents only. In contrast, in the data there is the proposal that children’s spirituality is firstly the parents’ responsibility and secondly supported by the community, which suggests the importance of parents and practitioners collaboratively nurturing the child’s spirituality. This is similar to the recommendations of Layard and Dunn (2009) who propose teachers and parents should support the child’s development of spiritual qualities.

In addition, children may spend times with adults in a range of settings outside of the family (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), with different spiritual views contributing to shaping their spirituality. However, inconsistency of responses, therefore differing from what the child already understands is noted as a spiritual barrier in the data regarding explaining death to a child. Adams (2010) reminds practitioners to avoid attempting to take on “therapeutic roles” (p.84) and to communicate with parents to support children, this especially applies to children experiencing difficult or challenging experiences. A further concern of practitioners shown in the data is the impact of influential sources of visual information with the capacity to trigger questioning, for example: accessed by watching television (McCreery, 1996), the internet, advertising on public transport and in the street.

Children's beliefs are represented in the data. First, in the home context planning to share a meal with a guest. Second, in the religious context, independently praying at meal times in the early years setting or with practitioners and peers. As well as at home, praying after seeing visual images of people in need. Third, preparing for Christmas and anticipating a visit from Santa Claus. The time of the year of the data collection with parents, predominantly starting in January, may have influenced the explicit references to Christmas in the data. Similarly, some of the practitioners reflected on Christmas alongside a variety of activities in the settings occurring in preparation for a range of celebrations and festivals, these included family events. Notably, a paradox in the data, is the children's beliefs are troubled by spiritual barriers and a fundamental point is these are parental concerns related to children hearing conflicting information from people outside of the family, including through the media. Political correctness was also identified by a participant as a barrier to spirituality, in the context of the formation of macro-level policy. Shown in the data are examples of practice where practitioners responded to the spiritual voices (Watson, 2017) of the children searching for meaning, therefore in the next part of the chapter I propose the notion of 'spiritual dilemma'.

6.10 Sensitive conversations and spiritual dilemmas

Childhood presents experiences for some children that provoke questioning the meaning of life, for example, personal or family illness, loss and grief through the death or separation from a relative or friend. Associated with transitions and challenges faced in life is the dark side of spirituality (de Souza, 2012). A concept identified in the data relates to sensitive conversations in early years practice when children articulate past or current experiences of sadness, sharing these with practitioners and sometimes with their peers. Duffy (2008, p.19) proposes sadness can "wash over us in waves" without any warning. Predominantly where sensitive conversations in practice were reflected on by the participants this focused on death and bereavement. In practice, the unprepared practitioner can be placed in a position of 'spiritual dilemma'. By this I mean, encountered moments evoking sensitive responses from one person to another where uncertainty surrounds what should be said.

Responding to the “child’s spiritual voice” (Adams et al., 2008, p.35) which may be expressed through questions in the early years setting (Adams, 2009), for some practitioners is unrehearsed when the topic is death and dying. With hindsight, a field question could have enquired if the practitioners have access to resources in the early years settings, for example the literature referred to in Chapter 2, of Varley (1984) and Stickney (1999) or similar resources, to share with the children and their families. Duffy (2003) recommends the resources of Varley (1984) and Stickney (1999) are suitable for children “up to 7 years” (p.71). Nye and Hay (1996) refer to “value-sensing” (p.146) as a category of spiritual sensitivities, including the search for meaning. Hill’s (2015) study illustrates that within play and conversations, young children theorise about death and act out what it means to be dead, while contextualising death within their understanding of resuscitation, skeletons, ghosts and heaven. In the classroom, the play and conversations were initiated by the children in the presence of their teacher (Hill, 2015). Similarly, in Chapter 5, children were heard openly discussing death in the presence of the practitioner. This suggests in play and conversations some young children appear to approach difficult topics, bringing their own sense and meaning to existential issues.

A dilemma for practitioners coming to light in this study is when children are bereaved in early childhood before starting attendance at the early years setting, practitioners may not always be aware until a child starts asking existential questions or showing curiosity, for example about heaven. What is important in early years practice is the sensitivity of the practitioner’s immediate response, which points again to the usefulness of resources in the setting to support children’s search for meaning. This can be set alongside effective communication with parents who may have preferred resources connected to the families’ religious affiliation, cultural or spiritual beliefs of death. Potts (2013) proposes within teacher training, opportunities should exist to study the implications of childhood bereavement. To sensitively support children’s search for meaning, it would also be beneficial in early education and childcare training, to draw awareness to bereavement support strategies and to advocate the importance of knowledge of local and national bereavement services.

Children's curiosity about angels was referred to twice in the data, linking to imagination which forms part of Nye and Hay's (1996, p.146) spiritual sensitivities within "mystery sensing", alongside awe and wonder. The first example, is the practitioner's awareness of a child wondering where angels can be found, knowing the child had been directed to look towards the sky. Adding a further dimension in this study of the sky as a stimulus for young children to experience awe, wonder and mystery. The second referral to angels shown in the data, occurred in another early years setting, the child has a notion of what an angel looks like to create an angel in a pre-Christmas activity. Adams (2010) notes angels and heaven are common features in dreams. However, it is unknown by the participant where the child's perception of angels resonated from, what is clear is the child's voice was heard in practice (Watson, 2017), leading to the child creating an angel that represented their own understanding of angels. This leads the discussion next to focus on early childhood education policy differences.

6.11 The spiritual rift - policy differences hindering a universal approach to spiritual development in early childhood education

A theme rippling through this study is division, division within spiritual definitions (Watson, 2017; de Souza, 2016), division between pre-compulsory and compulsory school education (Moss, 2013) and division between the sectors of early education provision (Roberts-Holmes, 2012). The rights of children to spiritual development, in the context of primary education in England, is longstanding in legislation since 1944 (HMSO, 1944). Yet promoting pupils' spiritual development gained attention in schools in response to the requirements of the 1988 Education Reform Act (HMSO, 1988) and the 1992 Education (Schools) Act (HMSO, 1992). This changed the spiritual focus in the curriculum from what Priestley (1997) described as "a much neglected area" (p.25) to a topic of research. However, the label of children's spiritual development as a neglected area in ECE policy, appears to have been acquired as a result of the EYFS framework since 2012 (DfE, 2012; Early Education, 2012). A policy abandonment unforeseen, as spiritual development was firmly positioned in the preceding Foundation Stage for children aged from three (QCA, 2000) and synchronised to nursery grant funding, legislated in the

curriculum (HMSO, 2002) and implied in the consultation draft as continuing in the EYFS (DfES, 2006a). Whereas the Birth to Three Matters (DfES, 2002) framework did not share this legal status, it contained no explicit reference for practitioners to promote spiritual development and children under three were not eligible for government funding (DfES, 2006b).

As mentioned in the literature in Chapter 2, Schein's (2014) concern of reference to young children's spiritual development lacking in some North American ECE curricula demonstrates the issue is not confined to England. Alternatively, the child's right to spiritual development and spiritual well-being is firmly rooted in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNICEF, 1989) applying across childhood. Sagberg (2017) maintains in the context of spiritual development "...respecting these rights according to age and maturity is a question of manner, not matter" (p.22) which is relevant to young and older children. Where the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNICEF, 1989) is referred to on the first page of the non-statutory guidance, 'Development Matters in the Early Years Foundation Stage' (Early Education, 2012), spiritual development is not mentioned.

Wellington (2015) argues that when analysing documents there is scope to question "presentation, appearance and image" (p.216). Positively, contemporary national policy documentation is published for accessibility for stakeholders and a global audience through the internet and its online access (Rizvi and Lingard, 2010). Subsequently, significant advancement in policy dissemination provides the advantage of hyperlinking related policies, which indeed is evident within the primary National Curriculum (DfE, 2013a). For example, in the context of promoting pupils' spiritual development the hyperlink leads to Section 78 of the 2002 Education Act (HMSO, 2002). The power of this technology (Foucault, 2007; Ball, 1993), can be interpreted as the search for knowledge from the original source verifies what is stated to be put into practice. Tickell (DfE, 2011) recommended "...the development of a high-quality and interactive online version of the revised EYFS, with clear navigation to help people find what they are looking for" (p.5). An advantage of the EYFS is its accessibility online, although a navigation deficit of the EYFS statutory

framework (DfE, 2017a; 2014a) and the non-statutory guidance (Early Education, 2012) is where reference to related policies are presented these are not hyperlinked for immediate access. If hyperlinks existed between the EYFS (DfE, 2017a; 2014a) and the documents outlining children's rights contained in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNICEF, 1989), where the children's right to spiritual development is overt, there is potential to raise awareness to this aspect of development.

In contrast, scope is provided through online versions of policy to search the text for specific words. However, if this was the only analysis conducted in this study the 'spiritual thread' between the Childcare Act 2006 and the Education Act 2002 (HMSO, 2002) might not have been found due to children's spiritual development references not existing in the Childcare Act 2006 (HMSO, 2006). Therefore, this study supports the argument of Adams et al. (2016), Goodliff (2016; 2013) and McVittie (2013) that explicit reference to spiritual development is absent in the EYFS statutory framework (DfE, 2014a; 2012). This continues in the revised 2017 version of the EYFS statutory framework (DfE, 2017a). In addition, erosion from the practitioners' gaze spiralled further following the review of the 2008 EYFS (DfE, 2011) removing the explicit spiritual references from the non-statutory practice guidance (Early Education, 2012).

In stark contrast to compulsory education a dichotomous position of young children's spiritual development in policy is traced to the introduction of the EYFS statutory framework (DCSF, 2008a; HMSO, 2006; HMSO, 2002). Practitioner awareness though, is not explicitly drawn to the legal requirement or rights of children in schools to spiritual development continuing in the Education Act 2002 (HMSO, 2002). Whether an oversight or intentional the outcome of a policy shift appears to have dislocated the universal approach in legislation of spiritual development in the curriculum for some children pending compulsory education. Thereby, policy erosion of spirituality in early childhood education cannot be divided neatly into compartments of compulsory and pre-compulsory education, stages of education or age boundaries due to the amendments made to the Education Act 2002 through the Childcare Act 2006. I propose the policy parameter is environmental, the promotion of

spiritual development within the curriculum is legislated in England in maintained schools and maintained nursery schools (HMSO, 2002), independent schools (TSO, 2014), academies (HMSO, 2010b) and free schools across the stages of education. Therefore, young children attending school-based early years provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage, irrespective of age, are included in this legislation which upholds the children's rights to spiritual development (DfE, 2010; UNICEF, 1989). It is therefore, confusing why robust reference to the spiritual dimension of childhood and the requirements of the Education Act 2002 to promote spiritual development is withheld in the statutory EYFS framework (DfE, 2017a; 2014a), as children in the Reception year of maintained schools and children attending maintained nursery provision are in this stage of education.

A major concern generated from the policy research and analysis is young children's rights to spiritual development when attending early years provision other than schools is not stated in legislation. Overall, children's rights to spiritual development in early childhood education was validated in macro-level policy guidance from 2000-2012 (DCSF, 2008b; 2008c; 2008d; QCA, 2000) for children aged from three years and for children under three years between 2008-2012 (DCSF, 2008b; 2008c; 2008d). Policy as written nevertheless, such as the children's well-being focused legislation of the Children Act 2004 (HMSO, 2004a) and Childcare Act 2006 (HMSO, 2006) are devoid of direct spiritual reference, subsequently it is open to interpretation to establish if these policies contain implicit references.

Discussing Te Whāriki, Ritchie and Buzzelli (2012) maintain the presence of spirituality in the context of well-being in a curriculum acknowledges "a dimension that is to be recognised and nurtured" (p.150). In England, promoting spiritual development is legislated in the curriculum (HMSO, 2002) and forms part of the regulatory gaze (Osgood, 2006), as it is subjected to scrutiny as a component of grading the quality and effectiveness of education within the school inspection framework (HMSO, 2011). What can be misconstrued by this approach is spirituality only matters in education for children when the promotion of spiritual development is specifically stated in

policy documentation and is subject to measurement in a regulatory inspection framework. Mistakenly, assumptions might also be made that promoting spiritual development is not integrated into practice when it is left out of policy. The sampling in this study is small but it is evident in the data that the practitioners engage a spiritual pedagogical approach in practice. The next part of the discussion focuses on early education and childcare training in the context of the position of promoting children's spiritual development.

6.12 Early years workforce training and qualifications – finding space for promoting children's spiritual rights

Qualifications held by practitioners in the early years workforce are diverse (Nutbrown, 2012; Roberts-Holmes, 2012). Noteworthy, is that practitioners working in early years settings with their highest qualifications below level 5 (DfE, 2017b) did not participate in this research. At the time of the data collection, the criteria to achieve the level 3 qualification, Early Years Educator (National College for Teaching and Leadership, 2013), contained no reference to spiritual development. Whereas the criteria for this EYFS contextualised qualification include demonstrating understanding of supporting “transition and significant events” (National College for Teaching and Leadership, 2013, p.5), the curriculum and child development. Still, to analyse whether children's spirituality is included in current training is speculative and the vast range of early education and childcare training and qualification routes (Nutbrown, 2012) leaves scope for further research, to explore the position of spiritual development in greater depth, for example in level 3 qualifications. Thereby, the data regarding whether the spiritual dimension of childhood was embedded into the six practitioners training programmes relied on recall.

A mixed response resulted, for example clear links are made to celebrating festivals and spiritual development, similar to those recommended in the early childhood education reports of Rumbold (DES, 1990) and Ball (1994). Beliefs, cultural awareness, equality and diversity are represented in the data, which can be matched to the SCAA (1995) spiritual and moral development guidance and to Ofsted's (2004a) guidance that focused on spiritual, moral, social and

cultural development. There is a pattern in the data of practitioners searching for resources to enrich their own understanding of spirituality, mainly as undergraduate students, along with the suggestion very little teaching time, if any, was afforded to studying spiritual development in their early education and childcare training. This seemed to be the case even when promoting spiritual development was transparent in the Foundation Stage (QCA, 2000), the practice guidance of the EYFS (DCSF, 2008b; 2008c; 2008d) and National Curriculum for Key Stage 1 (HMSO, 2002) underpinning their practice.

Given that in EYFS classrooms in primary schools, practitioners holding a range of qualifications work with teachers (Nutbrown, 2012), it is not clear how these practitioners are informed of their role to promote spiritual development or if this is incorporated in training. However, Mata's (2014) research demonstrates a starting point is the establishment of what spirituality and spiritual development means in professional practice. Yet the study of Adams et al. (2015) reported concerns about the reduction of teaching space given to studying spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in primary teacher training, their findings have implications for early year practice. Adams et al. (2015) argue initial teacher training needs to provide a "stronger foundation" (p.213) of SMSC. Whether SMSC foundations are provided in early education and childcare training requires further investigation. Nevertheless, if qualified practitioners move to work in other parts of the UK, Wales for example where spiritual reference is transparent in policy (DfES, 2015) or in schools in England and if promoting spiritual development is explicit in any ECE policies underpinning their practice, they need to have knowledge of what spiritual means. I therefore propose SMSC development should be integrated into ECE training programmes, including Early Years Teacher Status (DfE, 2017b) to provide practitioner familiarity to all these aspects of development.

Without digressing from the spiritual focus of this thesis, I raise attention at this point to the policy shift, of the Childcare Act 2006 (HMSO, 2006) amending Section 78 to omit subsection 2 of the Education Act 2002

(HMSO, 2002). Applicable to funded nursery education provision outside of the maintained sector, spiritual is not the only area of development named to be promoted in the broad and balanced curriculum in the Education Act 2002, consequently the policy shift applied to “moral, cultural, mental and physical development” (HMSO, 2002, p.53). Similar to spiritual in the EYFS framework (DfE, 2017a; 2014a), moral and cultural development are not explicit by reference.

Religious education positioned in the basic curriculum applies to children in the Reception year of schools (RECEW, 2013), practitioners and parents are not made aware of this explicitly in the EYFS statutory framework (DfE, 2017a; 2014a). Whereas they are informed of the requirement stipulated in the statutory EYFS framework where the staff-child ratio must include a ‘school teacher’ (DfE, 2017a; 2014a; HMSO, 2002). Noteworthy is this requirement of a school teacher in the classroom correlates to the provision where the promotion of pupils’ spiritual development continued in legislation, in maintained schools and maintained nursery schools (HMSO, 2002). This supports the findings of Adams et al. (2015) of the essentiality of teacher training including studying what promoting spiritual development means in practice.

Having discussed the findings, in the next part of the chapter I reflect on the scope and limitations of the research methods.

6.13 Reflecting on the research methods

The reflection on research methods in this section, focuses on the interviews and diaries as the role of the artefacts were evaluated in section 6.4. Reflecting on the diary as a research method, the second and third interviews held with the practitioners converted into a “diary-interview method” (Wellington, 2015, p.222). This method enabled the participants to select a diary format of their preference to take into account the use of their time to record entries (BERA, 2011). As mentioned in Chapter 5 the diary formats varied in accordance to the convenience for the practitioner. As a result, the second and third interviews were essential in the study for the diary entries to be transformed into a format I transcribed to maintain

respondent validation (Denscombe, 2014). Reflecting on spiritual practice (Watson, 2017), during the interviews the practitioners identified spiritual qualities in activities children chose to participate in, raising awareness that some of these were not consciously planned to promote spiritual development. The findings of Mata-McMahon et al. (2018) are similar in their study. Within everyday practice, the diary provided opportunities to record spontaneous events indicative of nurturing spirituality in the setting. On reflection, if I had planned to observe practice as an outsider to the setting, these significant events may have been missed.

A limitation of the recording of a diary, is that in comparison to non-participant observation the antecedent events, which have the scope to provide contextualisation may not always be noted. Yet, when combined with follow-up interviews, the participants extended their noted points, which argues for the value of using an adapted diary-interview method (Alaszewski, 2006). As a result, the second and third interviews were semi-structured with the field questions generated from the diary statements (Wellington, 2015). Ownership of the diary (Bartlett and Milligan, 2015; Wellington, 2015) as noted in Chapter 3, was established in the initial meeting with each practitioner. Where practitioners chose to use photographs to illustrate practice these were presented within an ethical framework (BERA, 2011; Prosser, 2011). Viewed in the settings, for example one practitioner illustrated resources accessible in the setting, and another used photographs to explain the planning of adult-directed activities to illustrate how these were associated with nurturing spirituality.

The series of interviews with the practitioners generated a vast amount of data compared to the single interviews held with the parents, a factor that accounts for the imbalance of data. A key consideration within a qualitative approach however, is not the quantity but the quality of the data (Denscombe, 2014). Providing interview schedules in advance of the interviews with parents and the first interviews with practitioners allowed scope for the participants to prepare for these (Clough and Nutbrown, 2012). Wellington (2015, p.150) highlights the possibility in research interviews of “ambiguity in questions” due to difference of interpretation of terminology. Deciding whether to design the

questions with reference to spirituality or spiritual development in this research led to using both terms. The use of both terms tended to also be used by the participants.

Given that the policy and documentary analysis included historical analysis to engage a genealogical approach (Foucault, 2002a), with all the archived policies connected to education and specifically to early childhood education, only a sample were selected. Leaving scope for further research, the criteria for selection was based on screening for keywords about spiritual and spirituality (Fairclough, 2003). This approach is hindered or slowed down when documents are not available online, alternatively accessing a complete version of archived documents allows for contextualisation. Before the review of the EYFS (DfE, 2011) reference to the inclusion of the spiritual dimension of development in practice guidance enabled practitioners to question how this transferred into practice. Yet exemplification of what spiritual development means in the early childhood policy context proved to be reliant on Ofsted's (2004a; 2004b) resources.

6.14 Conclusion of chapter

What spirituality means in early years practice to the participants combines many components, representing spiritual diversity (Watson, 2017). The parent participants raised awareness to the similarity of activities their children engage in at home and in the early years settings. How their children's spirituality is nurtured by others is important to the parents of this study and there is scope to research parents' views on a broader scale in future research. The practitioners interpret that promoting spiritual development is implicit in the EYFS (DfE, 2014a) and nurturing spirituality is embedded in their practice. Within the examples of everyday practice recorded in the practitioners' diaries a variety of activities were suggested as nurturing spirituality. Similar to the studies of Mata-McMahon et al. (2018), Mata (2014) and Schein (2014) the practitioners propose the spiritual qualities of exploring the natural environment. In contrast, awareness of the hurried pace of activities at times is also identified, a

further challenge is despite all the resources within the early years provision, some children experience boredom.

Confusingly, the erosion of mentioning spiritual development in the EYFS framework (DfE, 2014a) does not match the legal expectation to promote spiritual development in maintained schools and maintained nursery schools (HMSO, 2002). This is troubling, especially as to meet the legal requirement of the Education Act 2002 (HMSO, 2002) to promote spiritual development practitioners working in maintained schools and maintained nursery schools need to be aware of this part of their role. Contrary to the text of the Education Act 2002 (HMSO, 2002), as this is not explicitly stated in the statutory EYFS framework (DfE, 2017a; 2014a) it relies on practitioners in schools accessing other policies, for example internal setting policies and the inspection framework that specifies how spiritual development is demonstrated (Ofsted, 2017).

Tickell (DfE, 2011, p.7) recommended that “Ofsted and local authorities work together to produce clear, consistent advice on the things that early years settings have to do, and do not create unnecessary burdens by asking for things that are not specified in the EYFS”. Therefore, in settings not legally required to promote young children’s spiritual development, nurturing spirituality could be perceived as one of the “unnecessary burdens” (DfE, 2011, p.7) for the practitioners. Alternatively, the findings of this study imply spiritual development is intentionally and unintentionally promoted in early years practice.

The following chapter concludes the research by focusing on the implications for practice, policy and recommends future research.

Chapter 7 Conclusion

7.1 Chapter outline

The conclusion of the report of this study has four purposes. In the context of the five research questions, I draw on the findings applying reflection and reflexivity (Wellington, 2015). Using this approach, first I suggest implications of this study for future early years practice. The research methods provided scope to gain an insight into the participants' understanding of spirituality and how spiritual development is promoted within early years practice. In contrast, also emerging in the study are challenges in practice that have the capacity to hinder the promotion of young children's spiritual development. Second, as some of these identified issues are directly linked to the national policy framework underpinning practice, I focus on the complexity surrounding the education policy of young children's spirituality in England. Third, I reflect on the contribution to knowledge regarding young children's spirituality and early childhood education I perceive this study makes. Fourth, finally to end this chapter, I propose recommendations for future research with the capacity to further inform practice, policy and training.

The overarching aim of the five research questions was to explore the meaning of spirituality in the context of early years practice and policy in England:

1. What does spirituality mean to practitioners and parents of young children in contemporary early years practice within the Early Years Foundation Stage of England?
2. How do practitioners and parents of young children define spirituality?
3. What does provision for promoting spiritual development look like in everyday practice?
4. What is the relevance of promoting spiritual development in contemporary early years practice in England?
5. To what extent does the promotion of young children's spiritual development exist in early education and childcare qualification training?

7.2 Spirituality matters in early childhood education

At the centre of early childhood education policy and practice is the developing child (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; DES, 1967). A key finding of this small-scale research indicates children's spirituality is important and matters to practitioners and parents in early childhood education. There is an element of apprehension attached to defining spirituality (Hay and Nye, 2006), as indicated in the definitions presented in Chapter 5, articulating what spirituality means to an individual, finding the right words which are underpinned by personal belief, is perhaps what makes it seem difficult to define to others. Predominantly, defining spirituality or spiritual development tends to be the starting point in the research dialogue. Despite the lack of an agreed universal spirituality definition, according to Watson (2017) it is definable. Resonating through the literature in Chapter 2 is spirituality means different things to individuals, as noted in Chapter 1 and in the findings of Chapter 5, for some people it is not connected to religion whereas for others it is firmly connected. Also noted in the data, generated when the participants' artefacts were revealed and when the participants were defining spirituality, is that personal definitions can change or be shaped by life experiences.

Different views of spirituality are represented in this thesis in Chapter 5, it is imperative for the diversity of spirituality to be recognised in the early childhood education policy context. The findings suggest it is essential in everyday early years practice to listen to children's spiritual voices within the continuum of light and dark aspects of spirituality (Adams et al., 2016; de Souza, 2012). Taking heed that children's experiences, including unseen worlds, may induce questioning and the search for meaning (Adams, 2010). Furthermore, in early childhood education, whilst responding to each child's spiritual voice, respecting the spiritual voices of the parents within parent partnership is important. Connectedness (de Souza, 2012), the sense of belonging (Maslow, 1943), the fostering of positive relationships (Elfer et al., 2012) are suggested in the findings as distinctive components of nurturing spirituality. This implies facilitating the nurturing of children's spirituality in early years practice is an essential part of the key person role. The contribution of the practitioner's spiritual awareness to nourish children's spirituality is highlighted by Greenfield

(2018), Mata-McMahon et al. (2018) and Champagne (2003). I suggest the notion, that spiritually-attuned practitioners have the capacity to nurture children's spirituality, supporting each child's 'spiritual me'. Thereby, the proposed characteristics of nurturing spirituality identified in this research transcend boundaries of faith and these are shared experiences of the children.

7.3 Implications of the research

When 'spiritual' is referred to in policy texts in the early childhood context, it is at risk of problematisation if practitioners do not recognise children's spiritual lives (Adams, 2010), or the rights of children to spiritual development regardless of age (Sagberg, 2017; UNICEF, 1989). Furthermore, when uncertainty surrounds what promoting spiritual development means in policy it is endangered. A potential solution is for policy-makers to clarify their meaning of the requirement to 'promote spiritual development' when it is stated explicitly in policy, to provide practice guidance.

Spiritual literacy nevertheless, King (2013) argues "...does not just evolve by itself; it needs to be fostered and nurtured, it needs to be seeded to grow and flourish" (p.9). In early years settings, in a team approach engaging in reflective practice, there is scope to promote the exploration of spirituality within practitioner teams. This requires balancing the value of accepting differences of views and feelings that might exist amongst practitioners within the team, along with the need for a broadly common approach in the way spirituality is integrated within the pedagogy of the setting. For example, a practitioner participating in the research suggested introducing a dialogue in team meetings to explore the meaning of spirituality. A team approach with the capacity to open a discussion to focus on the children's rights to develop spiritually (Sagberg, 2017; Watson, 2017; UNICEF, 1989) and to consider the mind, body and spirit in holistic development. A route to raise awareness to listen to the spiritual voices of the children (Adams, 2010; Adams et al., 2008) and the languages of spirituality (Goodliff, 2013). At the same time respecting spiritual diversity and inclusivity (Watson, 2017), to take account of the "plurality of spiritual traditions" (Wright, 1998, p.86). Therefore, a strategy that may lead to support practitioners to question 'What does 'spiritual development' mean in

practice?’ whilst empowering them to reflect, ‘This is how I promote spiritual development in practice’. Therefore, I suggest three key questions to evoke spiritual discussion in early years settings regarding practice:

What does ‘spirituality’ mean?

Is promoting spiritual development relevant in early years practice?

How can young children’s spirituality be nurtured in practice?

A parental view in the study elucidates the shared responsibility of nurturing spirituality and the importance of spiritual dimensions in the children’s lives and to families. There is scope for further research, as only four parents’ views are represented in this study. In Chapter 6, I discussed the notion of ‘spiritual dilemma’, when a person is unsure of what to say that is tinged with apprehension of saying something competing with what the children may have already been told. Resources to support families experiencing bereavement, such as those referred to by Malcom (2010) and Duffy (2003), as well as stories reflecting a range of life challenging experiences to explore with the children and parents might unlock this unease if it arises.

I draw now on a limitation of the study, differing from the studies of Goodliff (2013), Bone (2005), Champagne (2003) and Giesenberg (2000), there are no child participants. Therefore, where children’s voices are represented in the data of the practitioner diary extracts or the parent interviews, it is at times when children converse with peers, practitioners and parents in their search for meaning. I will return to this point in the final section of this chapter.

Artefacts in the research, provided the bridging tool to open the spiritual dialogue in the interviews, these were underpinned with sensitive narration of memories, as noted in Chapters 5 and 6. An implication for practice is when children bring possessions into the settings, these too may hold significant spiritual meaning. In the following section I focus on the ECE policy landscape and the challenges for practitioners in both sectors of early years provision.

7.4 The convoluted policy landscape

Clough and Nutbown (2012) propose research is political. Troubling the discourse of young children’s spirituality is a deficit of research to inform policy

and practice (Rose and Gilbert, 2017; Adams et al., 2016). Legislation, indeed education policy is iterative, not static. Discontinuities (Foucault, 2002a) change the political landscape as new ideas, legislation and professional guidance are introduced. Goodliff (2016; 2013) urges policy-makers to rethink the position of spiritual dimensions in ECE policy. I concur and add, equality across the two early years sectors should be prioritised, as the findings of my study suggest significant policy differences between school early years provision and PVI early years settings (HMSO, 2006; 2002).

Promoting children's spiritual development in schools is enshrined in legislation (HMSO, 2002) and respects the children's rights to spiritually develop and to spiritual well-being (UNICEF, 1989). Whereas a policy shift, unearthed through the genealogical lens of policy analysis (Foucault, 2002a), reveals the removal of the requirement for this aspect of development to be promoted universally across the early years sector for children aged three to five (HMSO 2006; 2002). Changing the ECE policy landscape when the Foundation Stage ended and removing this stage of education from the National Curriculum (HMSO, 2006). A disparity, that contradicts the level playing field approach implied in the consultation document of the EYFS (DfES, 2006a), where promoting spiritual development in activities for all children in early years settings from birth to five years was proposed. However, the 2008 EYFS non-statutory practice guidance (DCSF, 2008b; 2008c; 2008d) embraced the spiritual dimension of childhood, in the context of spiritual well-being and acknowledged children's rights from birth to five years to develop spiritually.

As mentioned in Chapter 6, how practitioners working in schools are notified of the legal obligations stated in the Education Act 2002 (HMSO, 2002) is unclear. Some of the initial teacher training programmes are finding less time to focus on studying SMSC development (Adams et al., 2015). Erosion of the focus of the spiritual dimension of childhood in teacher training (Adams et al., 2015) is potentially troubling for the early years sector, because of the legal requirement to promote children's spiritual development in schools and for a teacher to be included in the staff-child ratio of this EYFS provision (DfE, 2017a; HMSO, 2002). Exploring what 'spiritual' and 'spirituality' means in teacher and

practitioner training programmes provides a space for spiritual dialogue, to develop awareness of spiritual diversity, spiritual inclusivity and spiritual worldviews. In addition, training should equip educators to engage in spiritual practice to nurture young children's spirituality, especially where promoting spiritual development is a legislative and regulatory requirement (Ofsted, 2017).

It is insufficient to leave spirituality to the hidden curriculum, if practitioners are not made aware of what promoting spiritual development means in practice. A solution is therefore required to support the meeting of the legal requirements of the Education Act 2002 (HMSO, 2002) in early years practice. Primarily, the findings and literature (Adams et al., 2016; McVittie, 2013) support the view that promoting spiritual development is implicit within the EYFS framework. There is a possibility spiritual development has become reframed or blended into PSED and well-being in the EYFS statutory framework (DfE, 2017a; 2014a), removing the need to present spiritual language in practice guidance (Early Education, 2012). I argue for promoting spiritual development to be integral and transparent in future ECE policies, where appropriate with reference to the associated legislation underpinning its inclusion to illustrate the position in the wider policy context. The latter, to match the information afforded to the policy documents of the National Curriculum (DfE, 2013a). In addition, when promoting spiritual development is referenced in education policy, no matter the stage of education, if the inspectorate definition or description is used as the professional guidance underpinning spiritual education and pedagogy, this should also be transparent.

7.5 My contribution to the spirituality and early childhood education discourse

This study intended to research the meaning of spirituality in early years practice to practitioners and parents of young children. On reflection, I had no experience of asking a person unknown to me, a direct question regarding their views on spirituality. Looking for ways to reduce intrusion and in the context of positionality (Hammond and Wellington, 2013) to reduce my "background, beliefs and values" (p.118) influencing participant responses, the idea of introducing artefacts into the research occurred to me when I reflected how I

would like to be approached if asked this question. I found no literature reporting the use of participant selected artefacts in research related to defining spirituality, which suggests it is possible their use in this study offers a new approach, generating visual data.

Whilst searching literature I found no studies reporting parental definitions of spirituality and Nutbrown (2018) proposes parents' views of nurturing spirituality are missing in research. I have introduced the parental spiritual lens adding this dimension to the spirituality dialogue. This is however, only a starting point for the spiritual discourse representing four parents' viewpoints in small-scale research, which can be built on in future research.

A further contribution is the proposal of what spirituality means to practitioners that leads to the identification of perceived barriers existing in early years practice and policy, with the potential to impact the children's rights to spiritual development. This includes the lack of an early years focused 'spiritual' definition and practice guidance, as well as concerns of the pace of activities. In addition, I propose the notion of 'spiritual dilemma', which could apply inside and outside of practice, with uncertainty of how to respond to children's differing spiritual voices.

The final contribution relates to informing policy. Research and literature focusing on young children's spirituality in the context of the 2012 EYFS (DfE, 2012) raised awareness to the absence of explicit reference to promote children's spiritual development (Goodliff, 2013; McVittie, 2013). I have built on this knowledge and call upon policy-makers, who hold the position of power, to change the spiritual position in policy to be universal for all children in the EYFS, responding to the children's rights to spiritually develop (UNICEF, 1989).

7.6 Recommendations for future research

The small-scale of the research reflects the need to conduct further research to inform the ECE spirituality discourse. However, it is noticeable in the literature of Chapter 2 and indeed noted by Oberski (2011), spirituality research is in the majority conducted by researchers analysing what others perceive spirituality to

be, I am positioned in this category. Therefore, I propose it would be beneficial to the spirituality dialogue for practitioners working in ECE settings to engage in research to provide the 'insider' perspective of nurturing young children's spirituality. This has the capacity to include children and their families, as well as practitioners and managers as participants. For example, "action research" (Wellington, 2015, p.3) conducted within early years settings provides the opportunity to illustrate any practice changes resulting from the research. There is also scope, to focus future research on the parental views of nurturing spirituality to include father, mother and wider family perspectives.

On a larger scale, a quantitative approach in the format of a national survey of practitioners and parents may generate data expressing a wider range of viewpoints and spiritual understanding than presented in this thesis. However, research is also needed to explore whether promoting children's spiritual development forms part of ECE practitioner training programmes, for example at level 2 and level 3. Collaborative research across the UK is another recommendation to inform practice, especially as the policy analysis in Chapter 4 illustrates there are spiritual components found in the early childhood education policies across the United Kingdom.

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Appendix 1 Confirmation letter of ethical approval -1



Downloaded: 17/07/2015

Approved: 03/07/2015

Jane Hudson
Registration number: 110115964
School of Education
Programme: Doctor of Education (Early Childhood Education)

Dear Jane

PROJECT TITLE: Nurturing the child's spirit in contemporary early years practice in the United Kingdom
APPLICATION: Reference Number 005326

On behalf of the University ethics reviewers who reviewed your project, I am pleased to inform you that on 03/07/2015 the above-named project was **approved** on ethics grounds, on the basis that you will adhere to the following documentation that you submitted for ethics review:

- University research ethics application form 005326 (dated 29/06/2015).
- Participant information sheet 1010199 version 1 (29/06/2015).
- Participant consent form 1010200 version 1 (29/06/2015).

If during the course of the project you need to [deviate significantly from the above-approved documentation](#) please inform me since written approval will be required.

Yours sincerely

Professor Daniel Goodley
Ethics Administrator
School of Education

Appendix 2 Confirmation letter of ethical approval -2



Downloaded: 16/02/2016
Approved: 16/02/2016

Jane Hudson
Registration number: 110115964
School of Education
Programme: Doctor of Education (Early Childhood Education)

Dear Jane

PROJECT TITLE: Nurturing the young child's spirit within contemporary early years practice in England
APPLICATION: Reference Number 007578

On behalf of the University ethics reviewers who reviewed your project, I am pleased to inform you that on 16/02/2016 the above-named project was **approved** on ethics grounds, on the basis that you will adhere to the following documentation that you submitted for ethics review:

- University research ethics application form 007578 (dated 08/02/2016).
- Participant information sheet 1015263 version 1 (08/02/2016).
- Participant information sheet 1015262 version 1 (08/02/2016).
- Participant consent form 1015265 version 1 (08/02/2016).
- Participant consent form 1015264 version 1 (08/02/2016).

If during the course of the project you need to [deviate significantly from the above-approved documentation](#) please inform me since written approval will be required.

Yours sincerely

Professor Daniel Goodley
Ethics Administrator
School of Education

Appendix 3 The connection of the research objectives to the research methods

Research Objective	The Research Methods/Tools: selected for data collection
1. To explore what spirituality means to early childhood education practitioners and the parents of young children in a range of early years provision in England within the context of the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (Department for Education, 2014a);	Case study; semi-structured one-to-one interviews with practitioners and diaries; semi-structured one-to-one interviews with parents. Participant selected artefacts.
2. To investigate how early childhood education practitioners and the parents of young children define spirituality;	Case study; semi-structured interviews; participant selected artefacts.
3. To critically analyse the position of the promotion of young children's spiritual development in past and current legislation and practice guidance, identifying changes through policy analysis;	Critical review of legislation underpinning education, policy and practice guidance documents. Policy analysis
4. To compare the position of promoting young children's spiritual development in the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (Department for Education, 2014a) to a range of curricula; including within the United Kingdom;	Critical review of literature, curricula and frameworks. Policy analysis
5. To critically evaluate what promoting children's spiritual development looks like in everyday practice through the lenses of practitioners and the parents of young children accessing early years provision;	Case study; semi-structured one-to-one interviews with practitioner participants and diaries; semi-structured one-to-one interviews with parents.
6. To scrutinise the position of the promotion of young children's spiritual development in early childhood education practitioner qualification training.	Critical review of literature; case study; semi-structured one-to-one interviews with practitioner participants.

Appendix 4 Mapping of the research questions to the practitioner interview field questions

Research questions		
P1	What does spirituality mean to practitioners and parents of young children in contemporary early years practice within the Early Years Foundation Stage of England?	
S1	How do practitioners and parents define spirituality?	
S2	What does provision for promoting spiritual development look like in everyday practice?	
S3	What is the relevance of promoting spiritual development in contemporary early years practice in England?	
S4	To what extent does the promotion of young children's spiritual development exist in early education and childcare qualification training?	
	Field questions drafted for the first interview	Link to research questions
1	How long have you worked in early years practice with children aged from birth to five years?	Context
2	How would you describe the setting where you currently practice?	Context
3	What is your role in the setting?	Context
4	In this setting, what age range are the children you plan activities for?	Context
5	Can you identify to me, the early years framework or practice guidance currently underpinning your practice?	Context
6a	You were invited to bring along an artefact to this interview related to your definition of spirituality, if you wanted to. What artefact have you chosen, if any, to bring?	P1; S1
6b	Why did you select this artefact?	
7	How do you define spirituality?	S1
8	What does spirituality mean to you in the context of your practice as an early years practitioner?	P1
9	How is the spiritual development of young children promoted in the early years framework or practice guidance leading your practice?	S2; S3
10	Can you give me some examples, from your experience, of what provision for spiritual development looks like in everyday practice?	S2
11	What barriers, if any, do you think have the capacity to impede the promotion of children's spiritual development in practice?	P1; S2
12	Are you happy to keep a diary, in a format of your choice, over the next twelve weeks to record any examples of activities or your practice linked to the promotion of	P1; S2

	children's spiritual development, to return to and discuss in the next interview?	
13	Reflecting on your own early education and childcare qualification training, was the spiritual development of young children included in the training?	S4
14	What do you think is the relevance of promoting spiritual development in early years practice?	S3
15	Do you have any further comments you would like to make about young children's spirituality?	P1: S1; S2; S3; S4

Appendix 5 Mapping of the parent interview questions to the research questions

Research questions	
P1	What does spirituality mean to practitioners and parents of young children in contemporary early years practice within the Early Years Foundation Stage of England?
S1	How do practitioners and parents define spirituality?
S2	What does provision for promoting spiritual development look like in everyday practice?
S3	What is the relevance of promoting spiritual development in contemporary early years practice in England?
S4	To what extent does the promotion of young children's spiritual development exist in early education and childcare qualification training?

	Field questions drafted for the interview	Link to research questions
1	What is the age of your child attending this early years setting?	Context
2	How long have they been coming to this early years setting?	Context
3	Are you familiar with the Early Years Foundation Stage?	Context
4	Can you tell me what you know about the Early Years Foundation Stage?	Context
5a	You were invited to bring along an artefact (an object/item significant to you) to this interview related to your definition of spirituality, if you wanted to. What have you chosen, if anything, to bring?	P1; S1
5b	Why did you select this?	
6	How do you define spirituality?	P1; S1
7	How do you think your child's spirituality might be nurtured?	P1; S1
8a	Can you give me any examples of activities where you think young children's spiritual development might be promoted at home?	S2
8b	and in the early years setting?	
9	Can you think of any barriers, if any, that might prevent young children's spiritual development?	S3
10	Do you have any further comments you would like to make about what spirituality means to you?	P1; S1; S2; S3

Appendix 6 Participant Information Sheet - for practitioners

Participant Information Sheet

I am conducting a research study for a doctoral thesis, as a postgraduate student of the Doctor of Education (Early Childhood Education) programme at the University of Sheffield. The focus of the study is the spirituality of young children aged from birth to five years and the purpose of the study is to find out what spirituality means to practitioners and young children's parents in contemporary early years practice within the Early Years Foundation Stage of England.

Research Project Working Title: Nurturing the young child's spirit within contemporary early years practice in England

Invitation: You are being invited to take part in the research. The following information aims to explain what the research will involve, as it is essential for you to have this information to decide whether or not to take part. Please take time to read the information, discuss it with others if you wish and ask me, the researcher (Jane Hudson) if anything requires clarification or if you need further information.

Why have I been chosen? The reason you have been chosen as one of up to eight practitioner participants of this research is based on your professional role; planning activities for children aged from birth to five years within the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Do I have to take part? No, taking part in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose to take part; if you decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and will be asked to sign a consent form. You can still withdraw at any time without it affecting any benefits that you are entitled to in any way. You do not have to give a reason. You may choose not to take part and do not have to give a reason.

What will happen to me if I take part? As a participant in the study, you will be asked to sign a consent form; this will also be signed in your presence by me in my capacity as the researcher. You will be invited to take part in a series of individual interviews of approximately 45-60 minutes with me. The first interview will have open questions focusing on the spiritual development of young children in early years practice and if you wish, you could bring an artefact related to your definition of spirituality to the interview. You may decline to answer any of the questions; in any of the interviews. If it is more convenient for you to be interviewed on the telephone or through Skype these options will be made available. The date, time and venue of each interview will be negotiated with you. I will present the record of the interview, transcribed word for word, when I return it to you, for you to read. This will provide the opportunity for you to make any changes or additions; I will then invite you to confirm this is a true record of the interview. You will also be invited to record examples of practice related to young children's spirituality in a diary for up to twelve weeks to discuss in the second and third interviews.

Will I be recorded and how will the recorded media be used? With your permission the interviews will be audio recorded. The recording will be transferred to a password protected computer for transcription and will be used for the data analysis, to be presented in writing in the thesis. No other use will be made of the audio recording without your written permission and no one outside of the project will be allowed access to the original recording.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part? There are no foreseeable discomforts, disadvantages or risks for you taking part in this research. If at any time during the research you feel unable to continue, you are at liberty to withdraw without the need for explanation. If you should experience the need for advice, support or counsel in relation to the project, I will ensure that as a responsible researcher I am able to furnish you with the names and contact details of such appropriate internal and external agencies who are expert in the field.

What are the possible benefits of taking part? Whilst there are no immediate benefits for those people participating in the project, it is hoped that the information you provide will contribute to the understanding of what spirituality means to practitioners and parents in contemporary early years practice in England. This has the capacity to support practitioners, parents and carers to further develop promoting the spiritual development of young children in early years practice.

What happens if the research study stops earlier than expected? It is anticipated that the research will be completed within the stated timescale. The interviews are planned to be completed by 31st December 2016. I will have an ethical responsibility and duty to stop this research if a child's well-being is at risk and to report such an incident to the relevant authorities. This would be in consultation with the Research Supervisor.

What if something goes wrong? Please contact the researcher (Jane Hudson) first if you have a concern related to the research project: jhudson1@sheffield.ac.uk and then if your concerns are not addressed to your satisfaction please contact the Research Supervisor: Dr Jools Page Email: j.m.page@sheffield.ac.uk Thereafter you may contact the Chair of the ethics panel: edu-ethics@sheffield.ac.uk and finally if you are still not satisfied the University's Registrar and Secretary: registrar@sheffield.ac.uk

Will my taking part in this project be kept confidential? Yes, you and your workplace will not be identified in the thesis or publications. To provide anonymity you will be invited to choose a pseudonym for the purpose of this research. This name will be applied when referring to results from the interview transcripts. With your permission, your professional role in the context of an early years setting will be stated. All data will be kept in a locked and secure location only accessible to me. The only time that confidentiality would not apply would be in the event of concerns relating to the protection of children, in which case I would expect to report such information and comply with the designated agencies as appropriate which may result in your right to anonymity being rescinded.

What type of information will be sought from me and why is the collection of this information relevant for achieving the research projects objectives? Your experience of working as an early years practitioner is sought to explore: what spirituality means to practitioners and young children's parents in contemporary early years practice within the Early Years Foundation Stage. This includes: how you define spirituality; what you think promoting young children's spiritual development looks like in early years practice; where you perceive young children's spiritual development is promoted in the early years framework and practice guidance underpinning your practice; any examples of qualification training where promoting young children's spiritual development was included.

What will happen to the results of the research project? The research findings will be shared with the participants and will be disseminated in a doctoral thesis. The thesis will be accessible to students and staff of the University of Sheffield and as part of the eTheses library collection. It is anticipated the findings might also be published in a range of journals. Participants will not be identified in the thesis or any publications. All of the participants will be given a short summary of the findings, this will be presented in a leaflet that will be handed, posted or emailed to you by me. The findings might also be used to initiate further research.

Who has ethically reviewed the project? This research project has been ethically approved via the School of Education of the University of Sheffield. The University's Research Ethics Committee monitors the application and delivery of the University's Ethics Review Procedure across the University.

For further information: please contact: the Researcher: Jane Hudson Email: jhudson1@sheffield.ac.uk or the Research Supervisor: Dr Jools Page, Telephone: 0114 222 8103 Email: j.m.page@sheffield.ac.uk

Thank you for taking the time to read this information. Please feel free to keep this information sheet and to consider whether you would be willing to participate in this research. **08.02.2016**

Appendix 7 Participant Information Sheet for parents

Participant Information Sheet

I am conducting a research study for a doctoral thesis, as a postgraduate student of the Doctor of Education (Early Childhood Education) programme at the University of Sheffield. The focus of the study is the spirituality of young children aged from birth to five years and the purpose of the study is to find out what spirituality means to practitioners and young children's parents in contemporary early years practice within the Early Years Foundation Stage of England.

Research Project Working Title: Nurturing the young child's spirit within contemporary early years practice in England

Invitation: You are being invited to take part in the research. The following information aims to explain what the research will involve, as it is essential for you to have this information to decide whether or not to take part. Please take time to read the information, discuss it with others if you wish and ask me, the researcher (Jane Hudson) if anything requires clarification or if you need further information.

Why have I been chosen? The reason you have been chosen to take part in this research is because you are a parent or carer of a child aged up to five years, attending early years provision in England.

Do I have to take part? No, taking part in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose to take part; if you decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and will be asked to sign a consent form. You can still withdraw at any time without it affecting any benefits that you are entitled to in any way. You do not have to give a reason. You may choose not to take part and do not have to give a reason.

What will happen to me if I take part? As a participant in the study, you will be asked to sign a consent form; this will also be signed in your presence by me in my capacity as the researcher. You will be invited to take part in an individual interview of approximately 30-45 minutes with me. The interview will have open questions, focusing on young children's spirituality and if you wish, you could bring an artefact related to your definition of spirituality to the interview. You may decline to answer any of the questions in the interview. If it is more convenient for you to be interviewed on the telephone or through Skype these options will be made available. The date, time and venue of the interview will be negotiated with you. I will present the record of the interview, transcribed word for word, when I return it to you, for you to read. This will provide the opportunity for you to make any changes or additions; I will then invite you to confirm this is a true record of the interview.

Will I be recorded and how will the recorded media be used? With your permission the interview will be audio recorded. The recording will be transferred to a password protected computer for transcription and will be used for the data analysis, to be presented in writing in the thesis. No other use will be made of the audio recording without your written permission and no one outside of the project will be allowed access to the original recording.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part? There are no foreseeable discomforts, disadvantages or risks for you taking part in this research. If at any time during the research you feel unable to continue, you are at liberty to withdraw without the need for explanation. If you should experience the need for advice, support or counsel in relation to the project, I will ensure that as a responsible researcher I am able to furnish you with the names and contact details of such appropriate internal and external agencies who are expert in the field.

What are the possible benefits of taking part? Whilst there are no immediate benefits for those people participating in the project, it is hoped that the information you provide will contribute to the understanding of what spirituality means to practitioners and parents in contemporary early years practice in England. This has the capacity to support practitioners, parents and carers to further develop promoting the spiritual development of young children in early years practice.

What happens if the research study stops earlier than expected? It is anticipated that the research will be completed within the stated timescale. The interviews are planned to be completed by 31st March 2017. I will have an ethical responsibility and duty to stop this research if a child's well-being is at risk and to report such an incident to the relevant authorities. This would be in consultation with the Research Supervisor.

What if something goes wrong? Please contact the researcher (Jane Hudson) first if you have a concern related to the research project: jhudson1@sheffield.ac.uk and then if your concerns are not addressed to your satisfaction please contact the Research Supervisor: Dr Jools Page Email: j.m.page@sheffield.ac.uk Thereafter you may contact the Chair of the ethics panel: edu-ethics@sheffield.ac.uk and finally if you are still not satisfied the University's Registrar and Secretary: registrar@sheffield.ac.uk

Will my taking part in this project be kept confidential? Yes, you, the name of the early years provision and the name of your child will not be identified in the thesis or publications. For the purpose of this research you will be invited to choose a pseudonym to provide anonymity. This name will be applied when referring to results from the interview transcripts. All data will be kept in a locked and secure location only accessible to me. The only time that confidentiality would not apply would be in the event of concerns relating to the protection of children, in which case I would expect to report such information and comply with the designated agencies as appropriate which may result in your right to anonymity being rescinded.

What type of information will be sought from me and why is the collection of this information relevant for achieving the research projects objectives? Your viewpoint of what spirituality means as a parent or carer of a child up to the age of five, accessing early years provision is sought. This includes: how you define spirituality and how you think young children's spirituality might be nurtured.

What will happen to the results of the research project? The research findings will be shared with the participants and will be disseminated in a doctoral thesis that will be accessible to students and staff of the University of Sheffield and as part of the eTheses library collection. It is anticipated the findings will also be published in a range of journals. Participants will not be identified in the thesis or any publications. All of the participants will be given a short summary of the findings, this will be presented in a leaflet that will be handed, posted or emailed to you by me. The results might also be used to initiate further research.

Who has ethically reviewed the project? This research project has been ethically approved via the School of Education of the University of Sheffield. The University's Research Ethics Committee monitors the application and delivery of the University's Ethics Review Procedure across the University.

For further information: please contact: the Researcher: Jane Hudson Email: jhudson1@sheffield.ac.uk or the Research Supervisor: Dr Jools Page, Telephone: 0114 222 8103 Email: j.m.page@sheffield.ac.uk

Thank you for taking the time to read this information. Please feel free to keep this information sheet and to consider whether you would be willing to participate in this research. **08.02.2016**

Appendix 8 Consent Form - for practitioners

Participant Consent Form

Working Title of Research Project: Nurturing the young child's spirit within contemporary early years practice in England

Name of Researcher: Jane Hudson

Participant Identification Number for this project:

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet dated *8th February 2016* explaining the above research project and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular question or questions, I am free to decline.
3. I understand that my responses will be kept strictly confidential, my name will not be linked with the research materials and I will not be identified or identifiable in the reports or journals that result from the research.
4. I understand that the interviews are planned to be audio recorded and the researcher will ask me for verbal consent prior to each interview; I am free to decline.
5. I agree for the anonymised data collected from me to be used in future research.
6. I agree to take part in the above research project.

Name of Participant
(or legal representative)

Date

Signature

Lead Researcher
To be signed and dated in presence of the participant

Date

Signature

Appendix 9 Consent Form - for parents

Participant Consent Form

Working Title of Research Project: Nurturing the young child's spirit within contemporary early years practice in England		
Name of Researcher: Jane Hudson		
Participant Identification Number for this project:	<input type="text"/>	
		Please initial box
1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet dated <i>8th February 2016</i> explaining the above research project and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project.		<input type="text"/>
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular question or questions, I am free to decline.		<input type="text"/>
3. I understand that my responses will be kept strictly confidential, my name will not be linked with the research materials and I will not be identified or identifiable in the reports or journals that result from the research.		<input type="text"/>
4. I understand that the interview is planned to be audio recorded and the researcher will ask me for verbal consent prior to the interview; I am free to decline.		<input type="text"/>
5. I agree for the anonymised data collected from me to be used in future research.		<input type="text"/>
6. I agree to take part in the above research project.		<input type="text"/>
_____	_____	_____
Name of Participant (or legal representative)	Date	Signature
_____	_____	_____
Lead Researcher <i>To be signed and dated in presence of the participant</i>	Date	Signature

Appendix 10 Data analysis mapping

CODES	CLUSTERS	THEMES	Research questions
Cultural and religious beliefs Children's beliefs Umbrella of different things Confusion between religion and spirituality Faith Places of worship Difficult to define Personal interpretation Values of everyday life British values Artefacts	Beliefs Religion Values	Defining spirituality	P1 S2
Individuality Well-being You as a person Discovering yourself Good person Spiritual side Kindness Happiness/Sadness Excitement Love Fun	Self Spiritual self Emotions	Spiritual understanding	P1 S2 S3
Environment - Outdoor Exploring seasons Wow; Awe, wonder, mystery The universe Observing the weather Natural interests Listening to the children Practitioner training	Natural spaces Existential experiences Child's voice	Spiritually nurturing environments	P1 S2
Why? questions Different answers Sharing experiences Talking about death Bereavement Angels	Uncertainty Resilience	Spiritual dilemma	P1 S2 S3
Family experiences Friendships Transition Feeling secure Building confidence Practitioner encouragement Society Key person role Parent partnership	Attachment Motivation Working together	Spiritual connectedness	P1 S2

CODES	CLUSTERS	THEMES	Research questions
Acting out stories Music Yoga Expressive art and design Imagination Imaginative play Role play Deeper thinking Circle time – sharing. Exploration indoors/outdoors New experiences Children’s interests Christmas Praying Memories Freedom of choice	Creativity Play Curiosity Children’s leadership	Spiritual enablers	P1 S3
Media influences Technology Influence of adults Adult views Conflict of views Political correctness Lack of definition Environment Policies	Media Expectations	Spiritual barriers	P1 S3
PSED Understanding of the world Enabling environment SMSC Characteristics of effective teaching and learning Unique child Making things exciting	Areas of learning and development Principles	Nurturing spirituality in the EYFS	P1 S2
Connection Magical experiences Magical thinking Stillness Time for reflection Mind, soul and body Nurturing spirituality Nourishing spirituality Free spirit	Spiritual literacy Transcendence	Spiritual relevance	P1 S3

CODES	CLUSTERS	THEMES	Research questions
Spirituality lacking in training Self-research of spirituality Celebrations and festivals Equality and diversity Theories of development	Requires self-research Topic focused	Position in training	P1 S4
Not clustered Challenging behaviour Boredom			